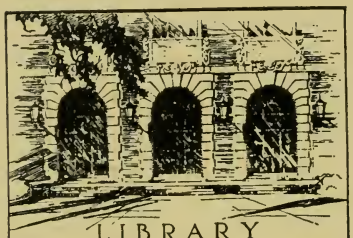
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THE

# WARD OF THE CROWN.

THE

# WARD OF THE CROWN.

A HISTORICAL NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"SEYMOUR OF SUDLEY," "THE POPE AND THE ACTOR,"
"THE FORESTER'S DAUGHTER."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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1845.

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THE

# WARD OF THE CROWN.

## CHAPTER I.

When old Hannah had unbarred the door of the Manor House, in answer to the summons of Hubert and his companion, she started back with terror, at the sight of the outlaw's martial figure.

"Make fast the locks with all speed, my good woman," he said instantly. "Where shall we find the Lady Isabel?"

" She has been in bed for the last hour," was the reply.

" Then she must arise, for I desire to speak with her instantly !"

" In the name of the saints what has happened ?" exclaimed the trembling housekeeper.

" Nothing yet, but there is much to dread," he returned, " and there is no time to be lost. So leave me to push in that bolt, and hasten to tell your mistress I must see her immediately."

The old woman, with many exclamations of astonishment, obeyed this command, and Hubert and Conyers proceeded, during her absence, to examine by the light of a lantern, the door by which Miles Forrest proposed to enter the building.

On entering the kitchen, their surprise was great to find a man slumbering on bench, in the deep recess of the kitchen the chimney, whence a few faggots still threw a feeble light around. Aroused by their footsteps, he started up, and they saw

with pleasure that it was old Andrew, the miller, who quickly informed them that when he had come that afternoon, to the Manor house, with a message from Conyers, old Hannah, to whom he was brother, filled with terrors, by the events of the morning, had insisted on his remaining for the night. It was true, he said, that if there was any chance of fighting, he could no longer wield a battle-axe as in former days ; but still he could do something to assist in defending the house.

Though the outlaw counted not much upon the old man's strength in case of a combat, both he and Hubert kindly professed they were glad of such an ally, under the circumstances which they briefly related.

Their conversation was speedily interrupted by the appearance of Lady Isabel. Attired in her usual mourning garments, with her black scarf crossed upon her breast, and a small lamp in her hand, she entered in obe-

dience to a summons so extraordinary, as calm and dignified as if she came thither to receive invited guests.

The whole manner of Conyers changed, as he stood with profound reverence before her. It seemed as if her rank and her misfortunes, equally inspired him with respect.

" Pardon me, my Lady," he began—

" Master Conyers," she returned, abruptly interrupting him, " there is no need to ask pardon of me, for that, which I feel assured, would not have occurred, had there not been urgent need. No matter whether you bring good, or evil tidings ; tell me at once, wherefore you seek me at such an unseasonable hour."

" Madam, there is a design formed to attack your house, soon after midnight ; to plunder it of everything precious it contains, and afterwards, to set fire to it to conceal the robbery."

" Let those who are abandoned enough to devise such a deed, come hither if they

dare," answered the lady as tranquil as before. "They will find nothing to pay them for the danger they incur."

"Pardon me!" returned Conyers. "They have exact information as to a secret hiding place, beneath the floor of the oak parlour."

"Ha, can it be possible!" she exclaimed with a slight start, then smiling with scorn, she continued, "that there is such a hiding place, I admit, Master Conyers; though how any man has obtained knowledge of it, I am at a loss to devise, since he who constructed it, and alone, save myself, knew of its existence, has long been in the grave But let those search who may, they will have small reason to rejoice in their discovery, for it is empty—empty—empty! I knew too well the reports circulated of my wealth, I knew too well the temper of the times, and of many who are my near neighbours, to keep ought precious under this roof. But speak openly, Master Conyers, if you have learnt more. I shall know better how to act, when I have heard who is the robber

even though he be my own son!" and though her voice trembled slightly, as she pronounced the last words, she preserved the same proud and noble bearing.

"It is Master Carlton," was the outlaw's reply, "and I have not been able to discover, that Sir Hugh has any knowledge of his design."

"Heaven be praised, if this crime, at least, is not be added to the long catalogue of his misdeeds!" was the exclamation. "If Carlton is alone concerned, let him come. I trust that if you and Hubert can remain, he will meet with a fitting reception."

"It is to defend you, Madam, that I am here," returned the moss-trooper.

"And Lady Isabel cannot doubt, that I would at all times readily lay down my life in her service," was Hubert's response.

"Does he intend to come in person?" hastily demanded the lady

"It appears so! Miles Forrest too—"

"What he, whom men accuse of the

murder of the young Princes in the Tower ? that wretch steeped to the neck in crime ?"

" The same ! he was here this morning in disguise, and found means to entice the dog from the court-yard. I recognized him from the window, and well knowing, that since the murder of the royal children, he ever seeks to banish care by large potations, I waylaid him, took him as a guest to the village inn, and there, by the potent witchcraft of strong drink, drew from him all I wished to learn. An hour after mid-night, they propose to enter by the old door of the buttery—a third associate is to keep guard without, and to make preparations for setting fire to the house ere they depart."

" Let them enter," said the lady ; " remain concealed till he has learnt how needlessly he has exposed himself to danger, and then I doubt not, you and Hubert are strong enough to master both him and his infamous companions."

" Nor have I quite forgotten my old trade,' cried the miller, brandishing the rusty

weapon with which Hannah had furnished him.

"I think it not impossible," said Hubert, "that when Forrest recovers his senses, he may have some remembrance of the manner in which he has betrayed himself, and may advise his master to hasten the hour of attack."

"It was with that apprehension that I hurried hither," answered Conyers, "and it were well, my Lady, that every light in the house were extinguished, save that of my dark lantern, and all in order for their reception, as soon as possible, if you are really of opinion, that we must permit them to enter."

"If they gain not admission to-night, they may return when I am less prepared," was her reply, "and I shall rejoice if the villain can be caught in such paltry crime, and brought to punishment."

"Then, my Lady, I beg you to retire to the upper story," was the outlaw's answer, "and I trust you will remember, that my

ancestors for many generations fought under the banner of De Vere!"

"I rely on your services," she solemnly replied. "It is a strange battle field for you, Hubert, to draw your sword on, for the first time; but the saints will guard and reward you for standing up in defence of a lonely widow, against the assassin and the spoiler."

"I only seek to do my duty," returned the youth.

"It were well if all did so," she returned, and then, giving her hand to Hubert, lest it might be for the last time; she again blessed him in faint accents, made a parting salutation to Conyers, and calling on the old housekeeper to follow her, retired to her own chamber.

Five minutes afterwards, all was darkness throughout the dwelling, and the outlaw and Hubert lay concealed in two different nooks of the old parlour, where the treasure was supposed to be hid; whilst the miller, creeping amongst the rubbish in the half ruined buttery, remained to keep watch on the

movements of the man whom Carlton intended to leave without; yet within hearing in case his two companions had need of his feeble assistance.

An anxious and awful pause followed these arrangements. The pulses of Hubert beat quick and strong, as crouched behind an old, oaken coffer, he listened eagerly to every sound that broke the stillness of the night. In a moment so critical, no dread of the approaching struggle, for a moment flashed upon his mind—on the contrary—he exulted at the idea of being realeased from his promises to Lady Isabel, and at liberty to measure swords with the man who had insulted him, who had striven to rival him in Ellen's love, and from whose hatred he had so much to dread. He only feared lest Sir Hugh Collingwood, he, whom he had that day been taught to call father, might accompany Carlton; disguised perhaps, so that without knowing him, he might unwittingly, in self-defence, commit the dreadful sin of parricide.

At length the old clock in the court-yard struck midnight, and in the deep silence that followed, he more than once mistook the throbbing of his own pulses, for the sound of distant footsteps. Then at intervals a fitful wind arose, and as its gust came wailing mournfully over the heath covered hill, the sound echoed through the building, like the warning voices of spirits. But ere long, during a lull of the blast, Hubert distinguished sounds, which left him no longer in doubt that the hour of danger had arrived.

The efforts of some one to force an entrance into the buttery were distinctly audible—then the yielding of the door—followed by smothered voices within the dwelling, reached his ear. When the whispering ceased, cautious footsteps crossed the kitchen towards the open door of the parlour, where Hubert and Conyers lay hid, and a light from a lantern, carried by one of the intruders, for the first time glanced on the walls.

As the man who carried it, passed close before the hiding place of Saville, a ray from the lantern fell on his features and left no doubt that it was Carlton himself, who disguised in coarse attire, led on the midnight robbers. Miles Forrest followed, and then, more to the dissatisfaction of the outlaw, than of his young companion, came another strong, brawny fellow, whom he instantly recognised as Wat Liddel, a daring freebooter who had recently escaped to Redesdale, from the dungeons of Morpeth Castle. Though Conyers relied on Hubert's courage, he knew his want of skill in arms, and in defiance of his almost rash bravery, and the advantage of an ambush, he saw with considerable anxiety the superior numbers of the enemy.

It had been previously arranged, that Hubert should remain perfectly quiet, till at a signal agreed between him and his associate, they should both spring forward at once, upon the robbers, and with an agitation which every moment endangered

his concealment, the young man awaited the expected sign. He saw, with almost uncontrolable impatience, Wat Liddle in obedience to a whispered command of Carlton, proceed, like an expert carpenter, to raise the floor of the chamber,

As the murderer Forrest leant over him, holding the lantern, and its lurid light fell on his thin, and now haggard features, and gleamed athwart the figure of the Secretary, who, with his hat drawn over his brows, and his mantle gathered around his face, stood leaning on his sword, and gazing with an expression of apprehension around, a more fearful group could not be imagined.

The impatience of Hubert waxed greater and greater every instant; but though he distinctly saw the flashing eyes of the moss-trooper, as he raised himself in the shadow behind the robbers, he gave no signal. He only watched them, as a tiger keeps its eye upon its prey; when having made a hole in the oaken floor, to the evident satisfaction of Carlton, they discovered the trap-door, as

described by Peggy. In a moment it was raised, on its hinges, and the Secretary, eager to be the first to seize the plunder he anticipated, sprang into the dark abyss disclosed by its removal, and leant down to open the coffer it contained, so that even his head was invisible to the outlaw, and he escaped the arrow which flew from the bow of Conyers.

Forrest and his companion were between him and the vault, and knowing that not a moment was to be lost whilst Carlton was unable to lend assistance to his companions, he gave the short whistle for which Hubert listened so eagerly, and the twang of his bowstring had scarcely sounded, ere he and Hubert, springing simultaneously from their concealment, threw themselves on the astonished robbers. Flinging away his bow, Conyers at once attacked Forrest with his battle axe, the weapon with which northern men had done fearful execution in the civil wars. But the murderer, who stood ready with arms in hand in case of surprise, and

was equally well practised in the use of this weapon, received and returned his assault with skill and courage ; whilst words of defiance and reproach passed loud and fearfully between them.

The blows fell upon their iron breastplates and morions like hail, but the combatants were so equally matched, that more than five minutes elasped, without the moss-trooper having gained the slightest advantage of his adversary.

Hubert, in the meanwhile, had proved more fortunate in his attack on the Redesdale man, who having laid down his axe when engaged in removing the trapdoor, had barely time to draw his sword, ere that of the young man was flashing before his eyes. More accustomed to the use of the axe and the bow, Hubert soon found that he had little to fear from his superior skill ; whilst his own quick eye and calm courage, gave him a decided advantage over the impatient and ferocious robber. Thrice the northman, receding before his well directed

strokes, was on the point of falling backwards through the open trap-door, had not the cries of Carlton, warned him of his danger ; and Hubert, having at length succeeded in wounding his right arm, above the elbow, already exulted in the hope of victory, when the Secretary scrambling with difficulty from the vault, drew his sword and joined the combat. Hubert retreated, so as to place his back against the wall, and for some minutes, parried the blows of his assailants ; whilst Conyers, who in spite of his own hard struggle with Forrest, saw the danger of his companion, called loudly for the miller to come to his aid. But Andrew made no reply, and confused sounds from the outer court, seemed to give evidence that he likewise had been attacked.

It was a terrible moment for the outlaw ! he felt, that if Hubert's life were that night sacrificed, he, and he only was to blame, and putting forth all his gigantic strength, he strove to rid himself of his ferocious oppo-

nent, that he might hasten to the rescue of the youth.

But Forrest was not thus to be mastered, his life had been spent in arms, and he knew every turn and trick of martial exercise, and whatever had been his conduct, he fought like a gallant soldier.

"Out on thee, rascal," he cried, "I will pay thee for thy flaggon of sack! Out on thee for a lying knave, who only makes good cheer with his old friends, it seems, to learn the best manner of cutting their throats! Thou wilt not get rid of me so quickly as thou thinkest; and if thy friend would save his life, he must call for other help than thine! Thou shalt have enough to do to guard thine own throat!" and he laughed a low chuckling laugh of scorn.

All the while he spoke, he failed not to parry and return the blows of Conyers, so adroitly, that it was evident, that victory would depend more upon the power of long endurance than on accident, or skill.

The dim lantern on the ground, as it

threw its long, pale rays athwart the darkness of the gloomy chamber, rendered this fearful struggle of five human beings for life and death yet more horrible; as from time to time, the flash of a sword, or the waving motion of an axe came within the circle of the light. The dull sounds of the combat were for some minutes, only interrupted by the short cries,, and quick breathing of the combatants. Conyers, though his back was towards his friend, knew that he continued to defend himself against Carlton and his minion. "If he can master one of them," he thought, "he has still a chance of safety," and in another moment, the dull, heavy sound of a body falling to the ground, seemed to fulfil his wishes. But he quickly learnt, that he was most bitterly mistaken.

"Is he dead, Liddel?" cried the shrill voice of Carlton, as soon as the contest with Hubert was thus concluded.

"I know not," answered the ruffian, "but he has bled confoundedly."

"Give him a parting thrust," cried the gentleman. "It is better he should tell no tales."

Ere the ruffian could obey, or reply, wild shrieks broke from the upper part of the mansion, and the roaring and crackling of flames, suddenly burst like a tempest on the night; whilst a dense smoke filled the apartment.

"Confound that fellow Ainsley, he has fired the house, ere half our work is done!" cried the Secretary, "Liddel leap into the vault, and take what gold you can find."

"You may do that yourself, Master Carlton, if you desire to be suffocated, but all the gold in the world, should not bribe me to stay here another minute to be roasted alive!" replied the fellow rushing towards a door, leading to the interior of the house, as he spoke,

Carlton answered not! for the first time in his life, he felt as if the punishment of all his crimes had come upon him; when he beheld the raging flames, which already filled

the kitchen and offices, burst through the open door, of the parlour. He saw Forrest tottering beneath the strokes of his adversary, who fought with undiminished ardour, and then volumes of smoke rolled between them, and hid them from his sight.

Careless as to the fate of his minion, he thought only of saving his own life; and following the steps of Liddel, he rushed from the parlour, he knew not whither, anxious only to escape the flames and smoke which seemed still to pursue him. At length he reached a chamber, where the darkness was still unbroken by the lurid light of the conflagration; save where the flames without, which like a bonfire illumined the canopy of night, shone through the crevices in the closed shutters of a narrow window. He sprang towards it, he tore down the woodwork with the strength of madness; but when this was done, his horror surpassed all bounds at discovering that an iron grate still remained to prevent his escape.

To retreat was impossible! all behind him

was a mass of flame and smoke, and the sound of beams falling ever and anon from the upper story, made him apprehensive every moment, that the roof of the chamber where he was thus imprisoned, should likewise give way, and bury him under the blazing ruins. It was a fearful minute ; an inevitable death of torture was before him—dark shadows of crime, a long and threatening train, thronged the past—and a dread of eternity, the eternity at which he had hitherto mocked, flashed across his brain. The thought was not to be endured! He seized the iron barrier with convulsive grasp, he shook it till a portion of the stone work that supported it, crumbled and fell. A new hope inspired him ; he made a second effort, and one of the bars crashed outwards to the ground. Another, and there would be room for his body to pass! and the iron actually bent beneath the violence of his passionate efforts. Again—he heard the ceiling, cracking above his head—a huge mass of plaster fell at his feet, breaking

into a thousand pieces, and nearly stifling him with dust. His life depended on an instant. Once more he shook the bar, and with a wild cry of joy, even more awful than the shriek of despair, he felt it yield beneath his trembling hands, and in another moment he stood upon the green-sward of the grassy hill.

His life was saved as by a miracle, yet no words of thanksgiving passed his lips! The first thought that crossed his mind, as he gazed on the burning mansion whence he had escaped, was, that all had perished there, who could have borne testimony against him, as to the fearful deeds of the night. He felt no regret, even for the probable fate of his own agents; they had been long and deeply trusted, and he was glad to be thus relieved from the importunate and increasing demands, which they frequently made upon his liberality and powers of endurance. Had his crimes themselves been blotted out, he would have less rejoiced, than at being thus liberated from

their witnesses! "I am henceforth free," he cried, "and though the treasure of the old hag is lost, there are many precious stakes to be played for yet, on this side the grave," and he turned his back upon the destruction he had created, and walked with rapid steps towards the dwelling of Sir Hugh Collingwood.

Almost immediately after the escape of Carlton from the oaken parlour, his agent, Forrest, distracted by the wild progress of the flames, the flight of his associates, and the fear of inevitable death, lost all the deliberate tranquillity, which, till then, had been his best defence. He no longer fought like a soldier, but a madman; whilst Conyers on the contrary, with the utmost presence of mind, was ready to take advantage of the slightest error he committed. He had heard the distant shrieks of the miller and the old housekeeper, as if in imminent peril, and equally eager to fly to their assistance, and avenge the fall of Hubert, he saw with rejoicing, by the light

of the flames, that the murderer tottered beneath his blows. His battle axe once more whirled around, and shivering the uplifted weapon of Forrest into a thousand atoms, it fell like a thunderbolt upon his head, and cleft it to the shoulders. He had no time to utter a cry, or betray one sign of agony. As if struck by divine justice, the murderer of the young Princes in the Tower,—the executioner of their uncle Clarence—passed to eternity without repentance, confession, or priestly consolation.

Conyers no sooner saw his enemy stiff and motionless at his feet, than he sprang over the yawning abyss of the trap-door, which divided him from the body of Hubert. It lay upon the blood-stained floor, without signs of life ; but tarrying not to examine further, the moss-trooper lifted the heavy burthen in his arms, and hurried to the window, which was the most distant from the rapidly advancing flames. More calm than Carlton, he withdrew its bolts and fastenings with one hand, whilst he supported

the insensible body of the youth, on its projecting ledge, with the other. Luckily there was no outer grate to impede his progress, and as the casement was only a trifling distance from the ground, he found no difficulty in lifting out the body of Hubert, after he had himself passed into the open air.

This done, he rushed instantly to the fountain, whose clear waters were playing, as if in mockery of the raging flames they reflected, as quietly in the centre of the court where he stood, as an unconscious child upon its mother's bosom, when the hurricane of war is destroying the desolated land. With the practised hand of a long experienced soldier, he tore off the youth's garments, to ascertain the nature of his wounds, and though, when discovered, he was unable to decide as to their depth, or danger, he saw with satisfaction that they had ceased to bleed. He rent his plaid into many shreds, and dipping it into the cold water of the fountain, he bound it round the sword cut in Hubert's left arm, whence the pro-

fuse loss of blood had probably been the cause of his fainting. He saw too, that the hair was clotted with gore, and without daring to examine further, he wrapped the same stuff around it, in the manner of a turban.

This done, and the body laid out upon the dewy grass, he for the first time looked up with horror, at the burning dwelling of Lady Isabel. Remembering the shrieks he had heard ere he left the building, he felt a fearful anxiety for her fate, as well as for that of the miller, whose inattention to his repeated cries for aid, gave rise to the worst apprehensions.

Though desirous to procure with all speed, the aid of Marion's skill in surgery for Hubert's wounds, he could not quit the scene of misfortune, till he had ascertained the destiny of his friends. Believing that the means he had used were sufficient to stop all further effusion of blood for the present, and that the body might be left for a brief space, without immediate danger, on the grass, he determined at least to explore the

offices at the other side of the building, before he departed.

The flames were raging with greater violence than ever; shooting forth from every window of the building and mingling fitfully with the huge volumes of smoke that rolled away with incredible rapidity before the wind. The young leaves on the nearest trees were shrivelled and dried in the heat, the wild birds flew affrighted from their roost, with mournful shrieks, that added a new horror to the wildness of the scene, whilst the dogs afar off, awakened by the unwonted light, raised dismal howls, as if conscious of the presence of death.

Before Conyers had half passed the court, the roof of the house fell in, with a tremendous crash, and all was, for a few minutes, buried in a lurid and most awful gloom. Then, again, as if the mighty element was impatient of even momentary control, a vast fountain of glowing sparks and burning flakes shot high on the air, to fall again, hissing and smoking over the fields around,

Spent by the violence of this final effort the fury of the conflagration soon afterwards evidently and rapidly diminished. Flames only at intervals burst forth from the smouldering ruins, and when the light of morning beamed upon the desolate scene, all was black and gloomy and forsaken.

## CHAPTER II.

Lady Isabel, alarmed by the cries of Hannah and the miller, had striven, at the commencement of the conflagration, to descend by a back staircase to the oaken parlour, with a confused feeling that her presence there was necessary to rescue Hubert from the multiplied dangers which surrounded him ; but thick volumes of smoke soon impeded her progress. The steps near the ground were already in flames, and retreat-

ing with a beating heart to her chamber, she was compelled to escape by another avenue, alone, and in ignorance of the fate of her friends. Passing into the garden, she paused not till, beyond the reach of the scorching heat of the blazing mansion, she reached the skirts of a small grove. There she first turned, to gaze upon the spectacle of the destruction of the house, which had been her home for more than twenty years.

Her grey hair, unbound in the hurry of her flight, floated wildly round her thin and haggard visage. The mourning garb she had not laid aside since her interview with Conyers and Hubert, and the black scarf she had hastily thrown over her shoulders, were all she had apparently saved from the flames, but no tear dimmed her eye—no lamentation broke from her lips, and nothing was to be heard but her low laugh of pleasure, as she pressed her hand on her heart, and found that the last letter from her son Reginald still lay there secure.

"Let all the rest burn," she muttered,

" many and bitter are the days of agony I have endured within those walls, till the very sight of them filled me with loathing. It is heaven's mercy which thus seeks to annihilate them, with all their terrible remembrances. There have I endured the agony of doubt, until my hopes became despair—there have I learnt to feel that my soul's idol—my first born—had gone before me to the grave, and yet with sadness and anguish to curse my only living son—the cause of all this misery," and the desolate mother pressed her hands before her eyes, as if to shut out the horrible images that thronged before her. Then suddenly the current of her half bewildered thoughts was changed, and pronouncing, with a faint shriek, the name of Hubert, she ran wildly down the little sloping bank, which alone divided her from the house.

As she approached an outer shed, the flame had not yet reached, she was struck with dismay, by the sight of old Hannah, sitting on a broken stone, with the head of a man

on her lap. It was evident she had recently bound up his wounds, and was vainly endeavouring to recal him to life by repeatedly casting water on his face and temples, from a stone trough, against which she leaned. The lady knelt down instantly, to aid her servant in her painful task, and her surprise was great, when she had done so, to see that the wounded man was no other than Andrew, the miller.

"He will die, my lady—he will die—and I have been the death of him," was the woman's wild exclamation, as she now wrung her hands in despair; now chafed his cold and withered palms, or gazed in agony on his pale features, as they were made visible by the uncertain light of the flames.

"And Hubert! where is Hubert?" was her mistress's sole reply.

"Escaped! heaven be praised, he at least is safe," she replied. "I saw him spring from a window five minutes ago, and run down the garden, as swift as an arrow."

"It is strange he should think only of

self preservation, at such a moment," answered the lady, "Are you sure it was he?"

"I could swear to his height, and who should know his way so well about the place as Master Hubert," returned the old woman. "I warrant he has run down to the village for help, and will be back with all speed. But, oh, Andrew—Andrew, they will come too late to be of any help to thee," she added, suddenly changing the tone of her voice. "Luckless was the hour when I begged them to tarry for the night—and cursed be the hands that slew thee, the last of all my kin, a faithful brother and a true, hast thou been to me, since I was a babe in thy young arms, till now thou art a corpse in mine. All day may I sit by the winter hearth, and never hear thy bits of news, nor merry songs again! Woe, woe is me, for I have been the death of thee."

"Hush! he revives," said Lady Isabel at length, "I feel a pulse beneath my finger."

"Father of mercy bless you, for the

words!" cried the old woman, beginning to mutter a string of Latin prayers, as fast as her lips could move.

Lady Isabel, who placed no trust in Hannah's assurances of Hubert's escape, hung over the body of the miller with a lingering hope, that should he revive, he might be able to give her some more satisfactory information, and soon interrupted her servant's unmeaning devotions, by inquiring where she had found the body.

"I will tell you all that has happened from the beginning to the end!" she eagerly returned. "It is a terrible story—He is worse than the Scots—ten times worse than the Scots, though he is of your own kith and kin!"

"Who do you mean?" demanded the unfortunate lady, turning pale as the inanimate body she supported.

"Who, but Master Carlton, to be sure!" the villain that has been the death of my poor Andrew!" answered the servant, between a shriek and a sob, and her mistress

breathed lighter, as if a weight had been lifted from her heart. "I saw him with my own eyes," she continued, "by the light of the lantern, as I passed the parlour door, where they were all fighting like devils. For though you ordered me to stay up stairs, I could not do it, my Lady, when for aught I knew to the contrary, they might have been murdering my poor Andrew in the buttery. And to be sure, the first sight I saw, was a great pile of straw in the middle of the pantry floor, with brimstone and pitch, and I know not what beside; and Andrew fighting with a fierce, strong man, with a blazing torch in his hand, as if for life and death. Seeing that the poor weak body, with all his bravery, could do little in such a struggle, I seized upon the old axe, and thought to have dealt the stranger a desperate blow; but I no sooner came near him, than he sent it flying like a straw out of my hand, and when I seized him by the plaid and pulled at him with all my might, it only made matters worse; for in trying to get

rid of me, he let the torch fall amongst the straw, and there was a flame and a smoke in a minute, enough to suffocate a whole troop. The fellow swore in an awful manner, as if he had done his terrible work too soon, and tried but all in vain, to extinguish the flames; whilst his comrades, who brought in more faggots at the moment, fell on poor Andrew in a fury, and never left off cutting and slashing till he fell, as you see him, like a corpse to the ground."

"And the fellows then fled?"

"Ay truly did they, like foxes before the hounds, though I told them they had better stay to help their precious master, out of the fire they had lighted for him. When I saw the flames spreading rapidly, I ran to call on you my Lady, but it was already impossible to mount the stairs, so I dragged poor Andrew's body here, and have done all I can to bring him to life again. But woe is me, he is gone I fear for ever," and the poor old creature began again to weep and lament with passionate despair.

Her loud expressions of sorrow were however speedily interrupted by a short cry from Lady Isabel, when she saw the miller, whom she was anxiously watching, slowly unclose his eyes, and gaze for a moment around him.

"He lives, Hannah," she said, "but you must be calm and——"

"Yes, he lives," murmured the dying man, who had for some time heard all that had passed near him, though as it were, in the wild confusion of a dream. "He lives. But where is Lady Isabel? I must see Lady Isabel, for my life is ebbing fast, and I would fain tell her somewhat, ere I die. Father Christopher may say what he pleases, but she must know all. She alone can protect him! she alone can give him his own again. She alone—for though Sir Hugh has the papers, it is no use, he will tell no man," and his head sunk back on Hannah's knee, whence he had raised it, as if searching for her of whom he spoke. But his eyes were

dim with the shadows of death, and he knew not she was near.

"What must I know? whom must I protect?" cried the lady bending eagerly down towards him. "Lady Isabel is here—she holds your hand—speak, speak, I implore you, ere it is too late."

"Too late, do you say?" faltered Andrew, "Ay, I knew it would be too late! I told Father Christopher he was wrong, from the beginning; but he would not hear me, and so it is come to this."

"Andrew, by thy hopes of mercy if thou knowest aught of my lost Reginald, or his child, torture me not by longer secrecy?" cried the lady in accents of the wildest entreaty, as she fell on her knees before him.

"Ask me not—ask me not—I am bound by an oath," was the miller's reply. "But do not despair! however darkly now your fate may lower, take horse and ride to London. Father Christopher can tell you all. He can tell you things I dare not whisper."

"But who is father Christopher, and where is he to be found ?"

"He came to the mill at midnight, with the babe," he murmured, in accents even more composed than before, "and I told him to carry it and the papers to Lady Isabel—but he would not—though she was no more mad than I am. But go to her, Hubert—go quickly, I say—she was Reginald Collingwood's mother—she was my master's mother, and a fair dame and a proud, till he first rode forth to battle ; and then she drooped and withered. You would not know her now, master Reginald—but your boy—"

"Ay, where is the boy ?" demanded the lady, with a feigned calmness, which, when compared with the wild tempest of feelings in her breast, had something in it sublime, and almost unearthly.

"They have murdered him as they did his father," was the old man's reply. "But put out the flames—put out the flames, or Lady Isabel will be burnt in her chamber,

and die ere she hears the happy news. Ride to London as fast as you can, and Hubert may yet be saved and all go well. Come near—near—nearer still—and I will tell you joyful tidings," he whispered almost immediately, as he drew his listener's hand, which he held locked in his, still closer to him. "He was a gallant youth, though his father cursed him; and his child—ay his child—but I have sworn, and dare not speak, though others can. Ride to London, I tell you."

These were the last intelligible words which passed the miller's lips, and after muttering some indistinct sentences to which no meaning could be attached, his head dropped lifeless upon his sister's knee, and his limbs grew stiff and cold. It was in vain that Hannah called upon him again and again, to give her some sign of recognition and farewell; the spirit of the old soldier, after having hovered, as it were, a brief space between the past and the future,

had departed from earth and all its cares, for ever and for ever.

The short pause of silence that followed, was one of despair to the poor serving woman, and of wild and conflicting hopes and fears to Lady Isabel. The words of Andrew, though rambling and disjointed, were to her fraught with meaning, and gave confirmation to an idea, which had long been the sole glimmering light that cheered her on her dreary path. All the riches she possessed, would she have freely given, to learn the secret that had trembled on the lips of the dying man, and at the same time, to be assured of Hubert's safety. To ascertain the latter, she knew not what course it was best to pursue, and every chance of the former was now utterly at an end. Yet, who was Father Christopher, of whom the poor miller had stood so much in awe, and who, if his broken words might be believed, had refused to confide to her the secret on which the happiness of her life depended ? What papers did Sir Hugh

possess, and why should she ride to London, and to whom, in that great wilderness of human beings, could she apply for information ? She, a stranger, a resurrection from another world—a forgotten woman—from whom could she demand tidings of events, which had passed more than twenty years before ?

" And even should I find Father Christopher," she thought, " he may believe me mad as in former years, and refuse me his confidence. But no ! that shall not be again ! I will put a force upon my harassed feelings ; I will assume the garments of the court, and wear its silken manners for a time, as if no hurricane of woe had ever swept over my desolated heart ; a weak and simple woman shall yet be a match for that smooth-faced courtier, and even as he has been foiled of the jewels he sought to plunder to-night, so shall he fail in after days, to inherit the broad lands of Collingwood. But oh, holy mother, all will be vain, if the youth is already his victim.

Hannah, cease weeping, and tell me if thou art sure that it was Master Hubert who escaped. Thy old eyes are dim, and I fear may have deceived thee."

"Yes, they are in truth less sharp than formerly," she began, "but see—see, my Lady, there he cometh now surely, round the garden wall," she added, pointing to the figure of a man, who after advancing for a few minutes rapidly towards them, paused at a few paces' distance, as if astonished by the spectacle of so melancholy a group.

"Ha, Master Conyers," cried the lady, who immediately recognised the moss-trooper; Heaven be praised, that thou at least art safe, and come to give me some tidings; knowest thou aught of Hubert?"

"Ah, Madam," he returned in an abrupt and agitated manner, "I scarcely know how to address you, whilst that blazing ruin gives evidence how ill my vows of service have been fulfilled."

"But, Hubert, where is the gallant youth?

Let the house burn ; I heed it not, if he be in safety."

" We escaped from the flames together," replied the soldier, not daring to disclose at once, the whole of the misfortunes of the night. " I have bound up his wounds, and left him by the fountain in the court, whilst I made search for ou.

" Ha, Master Conyers, he is heavily wounded ? wounded even unto death, and you fear to tell it to me," cried Lady Isabel, with quick perception, at once comprehending the meaning of the outlaw's hesitation. " I am a woman forsooth, and must be softly dealt with ! It is loss of time ! I have an iron heart, Master Conyers, and have survived the keenest trial that can be mine on earth, so lead me to him, even though the damps of death be already on his brow. Hannah, God bless thee and thy lifeless burthen ! I grieve to leave thee thus, but the dying must be cared for, even more than

the dead," and without paying further attention to the poor housekeeper's terrors at being left alone with a corpse, at such an hour, and in such a place, she followed the departing steps of the moss-trooper.

Conyers made no attempt to alleviate her impression of Hubert's danger. He had been unable to ascertain the nature of his wounds, and such were his own apprehensions, that consistently with truth, he had neither consolation, nor hopes to offer her. They hurried along therefore, in gloomy silence, but though the distance was small, the circuit they were obliged to make, to avoid the burning particles that were continually falling from the fire, considerably prolonged it, and more than a quarter of an hour had elapsed, from the time the outlaw left his wounded companion, till he and the lady arrived at the fountain.

Though the moon was heavily clouded, the raging flames still made all things there as bright as day, and they were no sooner

in sight of the spot, than the lady gazed eagerly around in search of Hubert.

"He is lying on the grass on the further side of the water, Madam," said her companion, who failed not to remark her agitation.

"Ah! dead! already dead!" she exclaimed, turning her piercing eyes upon him, with an expression of deep agony, for which, even her professed attachment to the friendless youth was insufficient to account.

"Not when I left him," was the moss-trooper's only reply.

"Yet I see him not!" she wildly cried, as she sprang first to the spot. "By the saints, Master Conyers, you are deceiving me! here is neither corpse, nor living body!"

"Yet I swear by my sword I left him here, not a quarter of an hour ago!" returned Conyers, not less astonished than herself.

"The print of his body is yet upon the

grass, here are the remains of the plaid, I tore up to bind round his wounds. He was insensible, I confess, but perchance the cold water plentifully applied, and the fresh night air, have since revived him, and he has had strength to go in search of help."

"Heaven grant it may be so," she answered, "but it is more probable that Carlton, or some of his varlets, may have found the body, and made away with it to conceal the extent of their crimes."

"Perchance—yet it is scarcely possible, for their master has not the strength; the murderer Forrest, I saw die beneath my axe, ere I escaped from the flames, and those who fired the building, probably fled, ere the rapidity of the conflagration had alarmed the surrounding country."

"Lift up thy voice, for it is more powerful than mine, and call his name aloud," was the lady's sole reply. "Weak and wounded, he has scarcely had time, since you left him, to get beyond hearing."

The outlaw obeyed, but though the tones

in which he frequently repeated the name of the youth, were almost powerful enough to have awakened the echoes of the distant Cheviot, no answer was returned. He then applied a whistle to his lips, whose sound was yet more piercing, and with whose peculiar notes, he had already made Hubert acquainted ; but all to no effect. A mournful silence followed the shrill wail of the pipe, as it had before done the call of the trooper, and save the rushing and crackling of the flames, there was a profound and solemn stillness, over all the gloomy scene. The lady sat motionless, and lost in thought, on the brink of the fountain ; the outlaw walked to and fro, sometimes in one direction, and sometimes in another, endeavouring, in the wavering and dying light of the flames, to find some traces to direct his further search for his friend. At length, hanging on a thorn bush more than a hundred paces distant, he recognized a shred from his own torn plaid, and straightway carried it to Lady Isabel.

"The wind may have borne it thither," she said.

"It bloweth from another quarter," he returned, "and with your permission I would fain search further in the same direction. It is the road to Master Carlton's dwelling."

"Ha! that bodes no good," answered Lady Isabel, at the same time arising, and declaring her readiness to accompany the outlaw in his search.

"It is all in your ladyship's way to the Tower," he replied, as they hurried along with rapid steps down the path towards Ellington, "where I presume you will go at once, to claim the hospitality and protection of your son."

"Never!" was her stern response. "He has been a traitor to his king—he has wrought his brother's ruin, and I were indeed as mad as some men think me, did I now place myself in his power. His interests and mine are in too strong opposition, for me to trust in his fairest professions. No,

Master Conyers, in that house I never set my foot again, so long as he, who has unjustly made himself its possessor, still holds dominion there. I have known nothing but misery in such noble mansions; I will to the miller's hovel, and thence with thy help to London."

The soldier presumed not to question the lady, as to her reasons for undertaking so long a journey, nor to interfere in the family differences which made her so decidedly refuse to claim the hospitality of her son, but simply expressed his readiness to forward all her wishes to the utmost of his power.

"I have only one request," he said, "which is, that as the distance to the mill is only slightly prolonged, by following, for a time, the direct road to the Tower, we should take that path, to ascertain, if possible, if any further traces of Master Hubert are to be discovered."

And this accordingly they did.

The first part of their road lay over a wide, open heath, whence, could be seen all around, during the day, the waving outlines of the Rimside and Cheviot hills, like the huge waves of a great ocean, suddenly converted into solid earth by the touch of some enchanter's wand. But, though the grey light of morning then began to break, nothing was visible through the mists that veiled the earth, save the stunted heather, or yellow furze, hung, till nearly white, with dew drops, on either side of the narrow path, worn athwart the wet, short grass which scantily covered the poor and stony soil. From time to time the moss-trooper discovered the print of heavy footsteps on the damp ground, but his companion declared they were too large to be those of Hubert, and derived no hope thence, that they were on his track.

Frequently did Conyers renew his calls; but no answer was ever returned, and they had nearly reached the point where the two



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paths divided, without having found any signs to guide their conjectures as to Hubert's fate. They approached, with anxiety, the passage of the stream, of which we have often spoken. Broken rocks, brought down by former torrents from the mountains, lay scattered around, half covered by the rich vegetation of the deep ravine, like some disgraced and banished lord, around whom, in his fallen state, the flowers of peace and happiness bloom rich and bright, though in his days of lofty grandeur, they had found no root near, or withered ere they blossomed in the cold blasts of envy and ambition.

In turning suddenly round one of these green ruins of the hills, they saw, at a little distance before them, a boy seated on a fallen tree, with his face buried in his hands, as if he were weeping.

"Marion!" cried the moss-trooper to the astonishment of Lady Isabel, as soon as they approached near enough, to distinguish the

figure plainly through the misty twilight. "What art thou doing here at this hour? methought thou hadst long ago returned to the mill."

"Conyers!" cried the girl springing up with a short cry of surprise and delight. "Is it possible I see thee alive, and escaped from the power of that evil man?"

"Poor girl! you beheld the flames, and feared that I had perished there," replied the soldier taking her hand kindly in his.

"Oh, no—no—that had been too terrible!" she returned; "but I saw thee, Conyers, as sure as thou art standing there, I saw thee carried by two savage looking men, like a lifeless corpse to Ellington Tower."

"How long ago?" eagerly demanded Lady Isabel, who had hitherto gazed with silent wonder on the lovely being before her.

"Not half an hour," she rapidly answered. "Anxious for your fate, Master Conyers, after I had accompanied Mistress Ellen back to her abode, I still tarried on the hills. Sometimes I even ventured near the Manor

House, and listened, to try if I could distinguish aught of what was passing within. Suddenly, as I sat behind a stunted thorn-bush, five armed men passed close beside me. I recognised Carlton's voice, and knew that the hour of danger was approaching. Terrified at beholding that the numbers of the robbers nearly doubled what you were prepared to meet, I hurried instantly away to summon aid in the village, but long ere I had trodden half the way thither, the flames burst on the night—and pardon me—with a woman's weakness I flew back alone! I had not reached the outer court, when, near the fountain, I perceived two of the men I had seen in Carlton's company, bearing a lifeless body. The face was turned from me, but by the light of their lanterns, I saw that your mantle was thrown over their insensible burthen, and that your plaid was wrapped around its head. With fearful anxiety, bordering on despair, I followed the sad procession—longing, yet not daring to question the ruffians, till they reached the back en-

trance of Ellington Tower. Forgive me, Conyers, but I flung myself at their feet, to beg the body—your body, as I then believed; but they only laughed me to scorn; and entering the low porch, closed the heavy, grated door against me."

"My lady, it was Master Hubert, beyond a shadow of doubt!" cried the moss-trooper, without otherwise noticing the narrative which Marion had recounted with the most touching tenderness and confusion.

"And he gave no signs of life?" eagerly demanded Lady Isabel.

"Once, methought, whilst I followed, he raised his arm, and that I heard the murmur of a feeble voice," replied the girl, but no longer in the same agitated tone as before. Her eyes flashed with joy as she gazed upon Conyers, though it was evident she feared to express to him, all the happiness she felt in his safety.

"It is as I feared!" said the lady, turning to the moss-trooper with deep solemnity. "He is in the power of his enemies, whence,

even if they spare his life, no power of ours can rescue him, as long as Richard sits upon the throne of England.

"But cunning, which is a better match than force for such subtle schemes as theirs, may yet do much, Madam," he returned. "I pray you not to give way to despair. My imprudence in leaving the body, is alone to blame in this, and I pledge you, on the honor of a soldier, that no effort of mine shall be wanting to repair the mischief I have done. It is clear to me, that Master Hubert lives, or they had not paid so much attention to his body, and surely, whilst he is under the roof of your son, Master Carlton will not dare to shed his blood; nor can I believe, that even he would add a needless murder to the list of his crimes."

"Heaven grant that he be not conscious of having powerful reasons for committing such a deed," she returned with a deep sigh. "Ah, how fearful is my wayward destiny, that when, after long years of dark and dreary travel, a feeble star at length glim-

mered on my path, such troubled clouds must, ere I have fully seen its brightness, close over it for ever !"

" Despair not, Madam ! there is much yet to be done," rejoined Conyers. " It would, perhaps, be well if you go not to the Tower, that your residence at the mill remained a secret, till the success of my plans for Hubert's liberation has been tried. Yet should all fail, there can be little doubt you have means in your power, which cannot fail to purchase the fulfilment of your wishes. Sir Hugh will make any sacrifice to become possessed of your jewels."

" I will first have recourse to your skill in intrigue, Conyers ; I believe, in spite of anything that may have happened this night, that thou art sincerely disposed to serve me, and on that assurance I will rather depend than on Sir Hugh's taste for my jewels. This little page—"

" Or maiden in boy's attire, as I make bold to tell you, lady, for, in spite of her strange disguise, there is no stain upon her

virtue, to unfit her for honourable company," said the moss-trooper, interrupting her with a profound bow.

"Well then, this maiden, as I in truth should have guessed her to be, by the blushes that are mantling on her pale cheeks—as she appears well known to you, may accompany me to the mill; and whilst we proceed thither, I pray you, Master Conyers to do all you judge most likely to procure the liberation of Hubert."

"I will do all in my power, Madam," he replied, and then turning hastily towards Marion, he spoke a few words to her, in a low voice, concerning the arrangements necessary for the lady's comfort, in the wretched dwelling whither she was about to proceed,

The girl, after the conclusion of her narrative, had hitherto stood apart, as if diffident of intruding, unbidden, on the stranger's company, yet an observant spectator, might have marked a passionate lustre in her large, black eyes, as she watched with pro-

found interest, every word and movement of the moss-trooper. When he at length approached and addressed her, all outward evidence of the trouble of her heart, passed like the gleam of the lightning from the face of the cloud that gave it birth, and though a slight hectic tinged her usually pale cheek, she regarded him, whilst he spoke, with fixed, dull eyes, whence every expression, save that of obedience seemed utterly banished. Contented with her promises of zealous service, he then wished Lady Isabel farewell, and turned his steps towards the Tower, whilst the lady, with her new and strange attendant, proceeded with all speed to the mill.

It was the first time that Marion had ever seen the mother of Sir Hugh, yet she had heard enough of her sad history, from Conyers and poor Andrew the miller, to make her sympathise deeply with her misfortunes, and in spite of her dishevelled and disordered dress, there was a high-born dignity in all she said and did, that filled her with

involuntary respect for the unfortunate wanderer, in her solitude and desolation, such as she had seldom felt for the great, when surrounded by the lustre and ostentatious splendour of the court. Tears filled her eyes, whilst she gazed on her, for, taught by the struggles of her own heart, she knew how great had been the sufferings which blanched her locks and furrowed her wrinkled brow. The passionate and loving heart, the noble and generous nature of the lady, blighted and crushed by long years of indifference and ill usage, till, robbed of all that rendered life supportable, the heart became obdurate to human interests and human pleasures—all this, and much more, was revealed to Marion, as if by instinct, as she gazed on her, whom many, who understood not such feelings, had oft considered mad.

"Alas!" she thought, "thine is the madness of a broken heart, and happy are they, who with feelings as acute as thine and mine, escape this fearful tribute of female

weakness, to unrelenting wills and savage natures. Yet even wasted and worn as thou art, and, as I have heard men say, long dead to all common things, still hope springs up before thee, and beckons thee onward till the graveis won ; whilst I, poor wretch, look back with horror on the troubled past, and, in the present, snatch fleeting moments of uncertain joy amidst long hours of tears and anguish. Yet I shrink with trembling from a yet darker future ! Death ! death ! thou art my only solace—the sleep for which the weary sufferer longs, yet weeps to think on."

Engaged by such thoughts, Marion seldom spoke, as well acquainted with all the intricate paths through the woods she led the way down the valley. It was near sunrise, ere they reached the mill, and Lady Isabel, forgetting her own sorrows in contemplating her extraordinary guide, was more and more astonished every moment, by her manner, when she arrived there.

Marion's dialect convinced her she was

not a native of the north, and the light grace of her movements, and the modest delicacy with which she answered the various questions she put to her, proved her of gentle blood and breeding. Yet, though she confessed she sometimes sojourned in the mill, there was no preparation for her accommodation there, and though the habits of Lady Isabel had for years been simple and self-denying in the extreme, she learnt with wonder, that so fair, and apparently so delicate a being, could submit patiently to deprivations which even the humblest peasant would have shrunk from encountering. She forgot that there is one spirit, and one only upon earth, which sustains the feeblest and most refined of the sex, to support, with unwearying and cheerful endurance, the trials of banishment and travel, the burning sun of the desert, the frozen climates of the north. the dangers of war and the ocean, and all the endless catalogue of petty trials that wait on poverty and sickness—and that spirit is love!

But Marion knew it well—and Marion had no other pleasure upon earth, but in her self-devotion to the single object for which she only lived and breathed, though she knew likewise, and she had long known, that there was no hope for her, beyond that of his fatherly regard, and of flitting hours of his company, often in the society of others, and ever far apart. But though her youth had been withered and blighted by fearful calamities, and their fatal influence had placed a barrier between her and all the world save Conyers ; though the corroding worm of sorrow, was ever busy at her heart, and young as she was, she already saw the world with darkened eyes, yet no complaint ever passed her lips. She lived for another, not for herself, and cheerfully in all things she did his pleasure, and Conyers, aware that one cause of sorrow had clouded the sunshine of her early years, never suspected, when he saw her activity, and devoted service, that there lurked in

her heart, a second and even more corroding anguish.

She strove that morning to arrange the hovel in the best possible manner for Lady Isabel's convenience ; she brought her fresh water from the spring, to wash away the traces of the night's fatigue, she lighted a bundle of faggots in the chimney, and prepared a morning meal, with such provisions as poor Andrew's pantry afforded, and all with the lightness and order of one long practised to assist herself and others in every emergency. Yet she could not repress her tears. when she thought that the kind old miller himself could never more eat of the bread she had only the day before provided for him.

Lady Isabel, touched by her simple kindness and marvelling at her exceeding beauty, put many questions to her as to the cause of her disguise.

"I lead a wild and rude life," she modestly replied, "amongst men who have little respect for the courtesies of life, and

less for woman's weakness ; I sometimes follow Master Conyers to the battle, or the chase, and when he travels, it chances oft that he hath need of my help, or my company, or I must singly do his errands, where a woman's garments would expose me to rude observation—nay to insult—and when the death of my relations compelled me to accept the protection of that gallant soldier, and the fate of war drove him to shelter in the wilds of Redesdale, he had many reasons he said, wherefore he wished that to all, save friends, I should be only known by the name of Joscelin, and wear this page's dress."

"Have you known him long ?" demanded the lady.

"He was my father's friend," she replied, and turned away to bring faggots for the fire, as if anxious to avoid further questions.

Lady Isabel, occupied by many anxious and troubled thoughts, as to Hubert's fate, the strange, broken words of the dying miller, and her own extraordinary position, ere long,

took no heed either of her absence, or her presence, but remained sunk in a profound reverie ; until her visions were suddenly interrupted by the unexpected entrance of Master Conyers and her old servant Hannah.

## CHAPTER III.

THE feelings of Ellen, after she heard the harrowing disclosures of Hubert as to their relationship, were of the most painful nature ; the necessity for his immediate departure, robbed her of the only support which had hitherto enabled her to resist the persecution of Carlton, and she felt as if she had no longer a friend in the world, to whom she could turn, in difficulties and sorrows, for consolation.

Her father commanded, but would listen to no remonstrances—her grandmother had no influence, or authority to control his heartless tyranny, and though she must for the future regard Hubert as a brother, his position gave him no power to aid or protect her.

On herself, and on herself alone on earth, she felt she must depend, in the struggle that awaited her with the crafty courtier, and she did not lose the hope, that with the protection of heaven, she might in the end be victorious. Yet during that night of anguish, the oblivion of sleep, came not to soothe her passionate feelings, and she still sat engaged by her own sad thoughts, when tidings of the fire at the Manor House were brought at an early hour to the Tower. Her father's positive denial, alone prevented her accompanying him thither, and she was compelled to await his return, in a state of fearful anxiety. She could learn nothing as to Lady Isabel, and well remembering that Hubert was to pass the night at her

dwelling, she could not doubt that he likewise had been present at the conflagration ; yet, in all the various reports that were brought to her of the affair, no mention was made of his name. She heard, however, enough to know, that there had been an attempt at robbery, and that lives had been lost, and in this state of harrowing uncertainty, she was compelled to pass several hours. Her servant Peggy went out in search of information ; but Peggy would not, or could not obtain any tidings of Hubert ; and when Ellen had, a second time, sent her to the village on the same errand, and hours passed away without her returning, she lost all patience, and determined to go herself to the mill, where some had said, her grandmother had taken refuge.

Carlton still slept, when she left her chamber, and glided across the little garden and over the postern bridge. Not a creature crossed her path, for most of the men servants had accompanied her father to the Manor House, and the women were abroad

to learn all they could, as to the events of the night.

The sun had arisen, though mists still hung low over the earth ; but though Ellen had heard much of the savage marauders who had fired Lady Isabel's dwelling, her anxiety to be assured of Hubert's safety made her insensible to personal danger, and she trod the path, which at the commencement led over the open heath, with firm and rapid steps.

She had thus proceeded nearly to the range of the wood, when she saw a person coming thence, whom she quickly recognized to be the page, or rather the disguised maiden, Marion, who had accompanied her home the previous evening. What she had seen of this mysterious being, had taken a strong hold of her imagination, and a feeling that Carlton was their common enemy, originatiug from the scene she had witnessed in the wood, made her regard her with a sympathy, their slight acquaintance would otherwise not have warranted.

"Oh, heaven be praised that I have found you thus quickly," cried Marion, as she approached, "Master Hubert Saville is Carlton's prisoner, and you alone can release him!"

"Is he in the Tower?" exclaimed Ellen with breathless anxiety.

"I saw him carried thither, during the night," was the reply, "and Master Conyers has already discovered, from your servant Peggy, whom he well paid for the intelligence, that he is lodged in the small vault under that part of the building occupied by Carlton."

"Ha! and my father is ignorant of this!"

"Most probably! and Lady Isabel says he must be so. Every moment that Master Hubert is in the Tower, she declares that his life is in danger; and anxious to release him from the power of Sir Hugh, not less than that of Master Carlton, she has employed Conyers to procure horses in readiness for his flight, whilst I sought to engage you to set him free."

"In a vault under Carlton's apartments, said you?"

"So Peggy declared; and she added moreover, that the door was only fastened without, with bolts, which any child could withdraw. Master Conyers would have paid her to do so, but he knows her too well to trust her."

"He was right," answered Ellen, "I alone must do it. I can descend thither, through my father's chamber, who is now absent. and I know of a passage leading also thence to the woods. You must wait for us at the Deer's leap, to conduct Hubert at once to the spot where I trust Conyers can be ready, with horses, ere then. You probably know the smooth high rock, that is thus called; its base is clothed with brush-wood, and I engage, that in an hour Hubert shall join you there.

"Alas, lady," said Marion, "I am less sanguine. He was heavily wounded in defending the Manor House, and Master Conyers almost despaired of his life, till

Peggy, whose lover it seems made him prisoner, assured him he had only fainted from loss of blood, and had rapidly regained his strength."

"If he can move, I will, at all hazards, release him from captivity," returned Ellen, "even though I must for a time conceal him in my own chamber, till he is strong enough to quit the Tower; so hasten back to Lady Isabel and tell her to rely on me. Farewell! we have no time to lose. Remember the place of meeting is the Deer's Leap."

"Fear not! and heaven speed you," was Marion's reply, and exchanging hasty salutations with each other, they turned to retrace their steps.

Ellen quickly regained the Tower, unobserved, and her satisfaction was considerable as she crossed the great hall, to observe Carlton leave it, and turn towards the Manor House. Eager to seize so favourable an opportunity, for the execution of her enterprise, she lighted a lantern in her father's chamber, and proceeded to descend the narrow stairs

leading towards Hubert's prison. Wild and troubled feelings filled her heart as she advanced—anxiety as to Hubert's strength and powers of flight, terrors of interruption, and a sweet, though sad pleasure, that she should meet him once more, even under such painful circumstances.

She found, as Marion had told her, that the door had no lock; it had only previously been used as a shelter for cattle in case of danger; but her anxiety redoubled, when she saw, that even the bolts were drawn back. She pushed open the door—she pressed forward into the dreary vault, but it was untenanted! For a moment she lost all presence of mind, and pronounced the name of Hubert, but the dull echo alone replied to her voice; she hurried round to every corner with her lantern, but no traces of a recent inhabitant were to be seen, save some fragments of a torn plaid, on which were marks of blood.

How next to proceed in this difficult emergency, she was for a time at a loss, when

it suddenly flashed on her mind, that as Conyers had derived his information from Peggy, Peggy could, in all probability, give her some further intelligence of the prisoner.

It was long since the girl had left her, under pretence of making inquiries after Hubert, in the village, when, in fact, she was better informed as to his position, than any one there; and Ellen resolved at once to proceed to her chamber, whence she thought it probable she had never departed. A short, dark passage alone divided this little apartment from the staircase, and with redoubled apprehensions, she ascended thither. To her astonishment the door was fastened in the inside, but though she more than once felt convinced she heard the movement of some one within, no answer was made to her repeated knocks. At length, when certain that some one crossed the chamber towards the door, she called on Peggy by name, and upbraided her for her

delay in answering her demands for admission.

To her utter astonishment, her own name, pronounced in accents that made her tremble from head to foot, was the reply—in another instant the bolts were withdrawn—the door thrown open, and Hubert stood before her. When her first joyous feeling had somewhat passed, she saw, with terror, that his face was pale and his garments torn and stained with blood.

"Sweet angel," he said, gazing with inexpressible delight upon the object of his love, "I knew thou wouldst not refuse to give me thy parting blessing, ere I ventured on my dangerous journey. Ever good, ever kind; I doubted not, that, as a sister, thou wouldst visit me, even though tenderer ties were broken."

"Good heavens, Hubert, I understand thee not, hast thou demanded my presence?" cried Ellen, and her looks betrayed the strength of her unchanged love, even though her words were those of friendship only.

"It is my turn for questioning," answered the youth; "has not Peggy delivered to thee my message, and begged thee to come to me, were it only for a moment, ere I fled, perchance to meet thee no more on earth?"

"She is false as her employers!" cried Ellen, with a glowing cheek. "Marion alone informed me you were imprisoned in the vault below! and Conyers and Lady Isabel, having arranged all things for your flight, I have been thither in search of you. By mere accident I came here."

"And I, by Peggy's kindness. It seems she learnt my situation from the fellow who made me prisoner, and having a tender heart, came, whilst all others slept, with wine and cordials to comfort me; we were early friends on the village green, though my want of gallantry in late years had somewhat provoked her enmity. I soon persuaded her I was more likely to recover my strength in a comfortable chamber than in a damp vault, and that, for old friendship's sake, she ought to assist me to escape, as no one could

suspect her of lending me aid. She is a light creature but not hard-hearted, and after bringing me here and assuring me she would send you to see me, she is now actually gone down to the village to procure a horse for my escape."

"She is not to be trusted," cried Ellen, impatiently. "If you have indeed strength to fly, follow me, Hubert! Carlton and my father are absent, and ere the girl returns, you must be placed out of the danger of her intrigues."

"The saints reward thee, Ellen," said the young man, taking her hand. "I am ready to follow thee, were it to the end of the world, and, thanks to Peggy's cordials, I feel no lack of strength."

"Come then," said Ellen, "our moments are precious, dearest Hubert."

The young man, without replying, instantly followed her from the chamber, and having fastened the door on the outside, so that Peggy on her return might imagine her prisoner slept, they proceeded quickly to

Sir Hugh's sleeping chamber, and thence to the cabinet beyond. Ellen then, touching the secret spring behind the altar, entered the passage disclosed by the removal of the panel, and called on Hubert to follow her.

Fearful of the return of the knight, or the entrance of any of the domestics, her anxiety was great till she had again closed the aperture. Then making a sign of silence, she led the way with her little lantern along the caverns.

Although not a word was exchanged between them, these were precious moments to these young creatures, who, in spite of all that had passed, felt the intense affection of a first and only love In that hour of danger and anxiety, there was an exultation and a joy in the heart of Ellen, such as many, of selfish nature, never prove in the midst of prosperity. Hubert was at her side—Hubert was saved—and by her—and though they might never meet again, the remembrance of that hour would be for ever precious.

The young man kept his eye intently fixed upon her, as she glided along before him, with not less ardent though more melancholy feelings. Every step they advanced, hastened their separation; and all the fearful circumstances of the past night, filled his mind with many terrible presentiments. As soon as they had passed beyond the walls of the Tower, and silence was no longer necessary, he eagerly questioned Ellen as to the escape of Lady Isabel, and Conyers from the flames. She could tell him nothing, save that they were in safety; but all her worst suspicions were confirmed, by hearing from him in return, that Carlton was the leader of the attack on the Manor House.

"He came thither in search of plunder," continued Hubert, "and as Conyers and I were witnesses of his crime, we have everything to dread from his revenge."

"You must quit the North, with all speed," she replied, "and Lady Isabel lacks not means to bring him to justice."

"Men say it exists no longer," answered

the youth, "and that Carlton, as the agent of royal crimes, has no punishment to dread: but we will put our trust in heaven, Ellen, and thou wilt give me thy prayers. See. there is the day-light before us," he added pointing to the fissure in the rock, through which the beams of the morning sun shot bright and golden, "let us accept those rays as an augury of future joy. Conyers waits without, said you not, with a horse?"

"No, dearest," she exclaimed, "Marion alone is there, to conduct you to the moss-trooper. No horse could pass hither amongst the bushes."

"If I have to walk further," he said, "I must repose awhile, to recover strength, in this secure retreat, before I venture forth," and evidently greatly exhausted, he sunk back on a large mossy-stone, near the mouth of the cavern.

The agony of Ellen was great, when the clear morning light streamed full, and strong, upon his pale and haggard countenance. She saw, with fearful anxiety, that he was

in great pain. The most terrible presentiments came over her ; she dreaded that his strength had utterly failed him—that his escape was impossible, and that unable to proceed further, he would perish in that desolate place. She was on the point of springing forth to send Marion in quest of aid, but Hubert held her gently by the arm, and assured her he should soon be well again. She uttered no word of reply, as she gazed sadly on his pale face ; but overcome by anxiety, she sunk down on her knees, beside the stone, on which he sat. Hubert held one of her hands in his, and he saw that she prayed silently, whilst her eyes remained fixed on his, with an expression of the tenderest and most anxious love.

For some minutes, whilst they thus remained, nothing was to be heard save the rushing of the mountain stream, the waving of the trees in the valley, or the rustling of a dead leaf, borne by a flitting current of air through the cavern. But the tranquillity of nature, with its continuous and

monotonous sounds, was ere long fearfully broken, by a long wild shriek, like the death wail of one in the last mortal agony ; there was a crashing, and a rolling amongst the boughs, at no great distance from the cavern, and then all was still as the grave. Even the sighing of the wind amongst the branches was lulled, and no sound was audible save the flowing water, like life, rushing for ever towards eternity.

Ellen, appalled, sprang up in an instant, whilst Hubert, dreading what might follow, by an irresistible impulse flung his arms around her, as if to protect the treasure, he had no weapons to defend.

For a time they thus stood listening with the most intense anxiety, but nothing more occurred to give further cause for alarm. Hubert, then finding his strength revived by the repose he had taken, told Ellen, in low, soft accents, that his departure must be no longer delayed. She knew it well, but refused to leave him, till certain that Marion was his guide. To

this he vainly objected. With a quick movement she pressed her lips to his cheek, as if to bid him for ever farewell; and breaking from his arms, passed before him, from the cavern.

Hubert followed her amongst the thick underwood; but they had not proceeded ten paces, ere Marion stood before them, and in a low whisper, bade them pause and be still. There was something so appalling, so horror stricken in the expression of her countenance, that remembering the fearful cry they had heard, they stopped at once, convinced that some new and unknown evil threatened them.

For some time she uttered not another word, but kept her eyes intently fixed on some object visible from the spot where she stood, with an expression of the most fearful anxiety. Ellen was sure she heard the sound of footsteps, during this pause, and thought with terror of pursuit, and the danger of Hubert's arrest; whilst he, in the meanwhile, caught a glimpse of a figure in

the abyss beneath the precipice on which he stood, which awakened his worst apprehensions.

More than ten minutes they remained thus, not daring either to speak, or move; when at length, Marion heaving a deep breath, as if a weight was lifted from her heart, rushed forward, and taking Ellen by the hand, cried in rapid accents,

"Back to the Tower, dear lady! back as quick as thought! your presence may be greatly needed there, to defend your rights from the spoiler, and Master Hubert and I have not a moment to lose. Farewell—farewell! poor lady—thine is indeed a most sad destiny!" and with these mysterious words, she passed her arm through Hubert's, and leaving the lovers only time for a brief farewell, she hurried him away to the spot where Conyers had, for the last half-hour, been anxiously awaiting them. Ere they reached it, they unexpectedly met two of the servants of Sir Hugh Collingwood, who since the knight had discovered his mother's place

of refuge, had been sent by him to the mill, with different objects to contribute to her comfort. Marion spoke a few hurried words to them, as they passed, and pointed to the stream beneath—and though Hubert could not distinctly hear what she said, the men's start of terror, and the wild exclamations of fear and consternation with which they answered her, sufficed to convince him, of the awful nature of her communication.

In a moment she was again at his side, and for some time he could obtain no other response to his urgent inquiries, than reiterated entreaties for him to quicken his steps.

"Once, with Conyers you shall know all, Master Hubert," she rejoined, "but I will not endanger your life now, by useless conversation. There has been mischief enough done, during the last twelve hours, without your death being added to the catalogue," with this assurance, he was obliged to submit to her pleasure, though his curiosity and apprehensions exceeded all bounds, un-

til he saw the figure of the outlaw standing with a couple of horses, fully equipped for the road, under an old thorn bush near the high-way between the village and the hills.

## CHAPTER IV.

Carlton's satisfaction at the imagined death of his agents, was speedily destroyed by the appearance of Tom Reed, one of the companions of Forrest in their attack on the Manor House, who abruptly entered his chamber soon after his return to the Tower.

"Ha! thou hast escaped!" cried the Secretary abruptly, "and Forrest! where is he?"

"Under the burning ruins, for aught I

know to the contrary," returned the man, with that rude insolence, which he felt privileged by his infamous services, to indulge in.

"And we had nearly all perished there, by your confounded stupidity," said the courtier fiercely, "what folly, or treachery possessed you, to set fire to the building before our work was done ?"

"Mayhap I may be a fool to serve such a master," he answered rudely, "but for my treachery I dare any man to prove it. An old wretch, who kept guard in the offices, knocked the torch from Ainsley's hand on the faggots and shavings I had gathered together, and they were all in a blaze before he could get rid of her; but I paid her companion with a death blow I warrant you, and moreover I have brought you a prisoner into the bargain, for though the fellow was wounded, he had life in him still, and I feared might tell tales."

"By the saints, why did you not dispatch

him, instead of bringing such an incumbrance hither ?" demanded Carlton.

"I will tell you what, sir," he answered, "I will kill as many men for you, in fair and honest combat as you please, but confound me, if I can, or will murder in cold blood. I leave that to my betters."

"And where is this fellow, to whom you have thought proper to give a lodging ?"

"In the dungeon, under the east turret," was the man's surly response. "I can set him at liberty again, in five minutes, if it pleases you, and no doubt shall gain something pretty for my trouble, as the youth is a favourite of Sir Hugh's old mother, it seems."

"Ha !" exclaimed Carlton, suddenly changing his tone, "if it be that insolent varlet Hubert Saville, let him rot where he is !"

"And I must lose my fee for giving him his liberty ?" asked Reed.

"There is gold for you, my good fellow," said the Secretary, and he put a broad piece into his hand. "This time thou hast done right, and all I charge you is, to look well

to your prisoner. I will speak to you further on this matter another time, but at present leave me—I would be alone."

The fellow adjusted the belt of his heavy sword, with a half disconcerted air, made a rude salutation, and withdrew.

"It is a cruel thing, a man cannot do all his work alone without these insolent helpers," thought the Secretary, as the heavy steps of the trooper died away along the vaulted passage. "Forrest at least has perished, and that Conyers too, who was playing me false, no doubt, even with regard to the troops; I must raise men by other agents—and now for Sir Hugh. If he hath suspicions, I have no plunder to divide with him—but I must condole with him on his mother's losses, and give the whole matter aanother turn. Oh, wit—wit—thou art a precious endowment, worth many a fool's inheritance" he murmured, and throwing himself on his bed he sunk into a troubled sleep, which lasted till the sun was high in the heavens.

When he arose, he was somewhat provoked to find the lateness of the hour, and hastily arranging his dress, he proceeded at once to the chamber of Sir Hugh. To his annoyance he learnt that the Knight, alarmed by the account of the fire, had already ridden to the Manor House. Thither he promptly resolved to follow him, trusting to meet him on his return; as, if any unpleasant reproaches should occur during their interview, he preferred its taking place where no witnesses were near.

Till this was over, Carlton had to endure a period of most agonising suspense; one of those pauses in the ascent of ambition, when the adventurer beholds with horror, the abysses which are beneath him, and the dangers he has to surmount, ere he attains the height it has been the purpose of his life to win.

With many gloomy thoughts, yet confiding in his own strength to extricate himself from his difficulties, he left the Tower, and with rapid steps, soon gained the copse

where the paths to the mill and Manor House divided.

He had nearly reached this point, when he saw, on the verge of the opposite hill, Sir Hugh Collingwood approaching on foot, but accompanied by about half a dozen attendants. As to meet him in the presence of others, was what he most wished to avoid, he hastily concealed himself amongst the bushes, till they had passed, desirous not only of avoiding an encounter, but likewise to hear if any observations were made to his disadvantage.

Sir Hugh passed near him in gloomy silence, but he saw with satisfaction, that when he reached the path leading to the mill, he hastily dismissed his servants to return to the Tower, whilst he, having heard that his mother had fled to Andrew's ruined dwelling, proceeded thither alone. Carlton felt he had not a minute to lose, and springing from his concealment, he hurried down the valley, over rock and bramble, so as to

gain in a few minutes the advance of the Knight, and to enable him to meet him, as if unexpectedly, on his way.

The morning was dull and cloudy, and a heavy, white dew bowed down the weeds and grass with its weight. The mists still hung over the stream, the air was damp and chill, the whole aspect of nature dull and cheerless, when the Knight and his guest stood face to face in the deep and solitary valley.

The courteous greeting of Master Carlton was not returned, and the dark scowl upon the brow of Sir Hugh, would have disconcerted a less practised dissembler. It only put the Secretary on his guard, and prepared him for what was to follow.

"I grieve to hear of the fearful events of the night," he began with his usual tranquil manner.

"And by every saint in the calendar, thou shalt be made to answer for them," was his host's angry reply.

"On my honor, Sir Hugh, I understand you not!"

"The devil you don't! but you will quickly do so when you find yourself arrested for robbery, arson, and intended murder!"

"We are friends of long standing, and you seem to presume enormously on the patience of my nature," returned the Secretary, "but let me warn you, sir, you are going too far!"

"Not a whit—not a whit—" cried the Knight, with a bitter laugh, "I must go further—much further, I must go even to the gallows with you, Master Secretary, or I begin to suspect, in spite of all your fine professions, I may find my own head upon a scaffold, before I have time to say a *pater noster.*"

"This is language, sir, such as I am not accustomed to hear, without demanding satisfaction, or an apology," returned Carlton with affected anger.

"You may wait for eternity, before you have either from me," was Sir Hugh's blunt response, "though you are the king's confidant. I was a fool to expect either faith, or honest dealings, from a tool of the crooked backed Richard."

"Defend yourself, Sir Knight! this language is not to be borne," cried the Secretary, putting himself in an attitude of defence, and half drawing his sword.

"Pshaw!" answered Sir Hugh disdainfully, "there is time enough to fight, when we find there is no other way of settling our disagreements. You are used to strong language, Master Carlton, and must receive it, as well as give it. You are used to strong actions too, and if you wish to escape their ignominious punishment, you must give explanations likewise, as freely as you demand them. I am neither to be bullied, nor deceived so easily as you appear to imagine; and for the matter of fighting, I believe you know pretty well,

who is likely to have the best of it; so put up your sword, and have the goodness to give me an account of the jewels and gold, you have had the audacity to carry off from the Manor House, putting my mother's life in danger, burning her dwelling, and murdering her faithful servants, to gratify your inordinate avarice."

"By my faith, such charges are too outrageous even to be resented," returned Carlton with disdainful tranquillity, "I am at a loss to conceive, how a man of your acute sense, allowed himself to indulge such suspicions."

"I have proofs, Sir, indisputable proofs," cried the Knight, in a Stentorian voice, that made the woods echo, "damning proofs, as you shall be made to feel, if you persist in this useless denial. I have the oaths of those who saw and recognised you under my mother's roof in the very act of robbery."

"Ha! Conyers!" exclaimed Carlton, for a moment thrown off his guard.

"No matter who!" answered Sir Hugh!

"you have thrown a die too many, Sir, and there remains but one way for you to repair the crime, or, shall I say, the error of the past night," and he came close to the Secretary, as if fearful that there might be listeners, even in that solitude, ere he added, in a low, harsh voice, "give up your plunder, Master Carlton, and I am ready to bury all that has passed in oblivion."

"And your mother?" demanded the courtier in the same tone.

"She is a helpless old woman! she may cry aloud to the winds, and all who hear her will but think her mad."

"And your witnesses?"

"Can easily be silenced by a bribe."

"This is all admirably arranged, no doubt, Sir Hugh," answered the Secretary as tranquilly as before. "The only thing wanting, is the hinge on which the whole case turns, —I have no plunder to restore."

Wrought past all patience by this repeated denial, the knight had no sooner heard these words, than he burst into a vol-

ley of the most tremendous oaths, denouncing revenge and destruction against the courtier and his agents, in the most violent language.

Carlton listened to him with a smile upon his thin lips, and when he paused an instant to take breath, calmly thus replied:

"This is all very just, I admit—but you must first prove, that there was either gold, or jewels to plunder. I swear that all that ever was in the Manor House, is there still; and I believe, that my oath will go as far with the king, as that of any paltry witnesses in your power to produce."

"Then you positively refuse to restore me the jewels, the heir-looms of my family?"

"I have none to restore!"

"Then, sir, by my knighthood you shall be made to know there is law, as well as a king in the land."

The courtier laughed aloud, ere he answered.

"You are bold, Sir Hugh, but you may

live to learn, that a charge of treason from my lips, is a more serious matter, than a paltry accusation of larceny. Egad, Sir, I thought you knew ere this, that the royal favourites were privileged to help themselves at pleasure ; and I tell you frankly, I only regret, that these precious jewels, of which you talk so much, have not fallen into my keeping. You had better inquire further, before you run the risk of declaring yourself openly my enemy."

"I have heard enough already," cried the Knight sternly, "and I tell you once for all, Master Carlton, that if you refuse the terms I proffer, you must prepare to abide the consequences."

"You seem strangely to have forgotten, Sir Hugh," replied the Secretary, "that even were these jewels in my possession, you are my debtor to more than twice their value."

"The scaffold and the axe, obliterate all such obligations," said the Knight coolly.

"And the hangman's cord, when twisted

round your neck, will at once put me, as male heir, in possession of all the broad lands of Sir Hugh Collingwood," was the caustic reply.

"There you deceive yourself," rejoined the Knight triumphantly, his rage and bitter hatred, mastering every feeling of prudence. "A nearer heir, of nearer kin, still stands when I am dead, between thee and this fair inheritance. The son of Reginald, my brother, lives!"

Carlton, utterly confounded by a disclosure so unexpected, for a moment made no reply; but when the Knight, as if fearful that he had not clearly comprehended him, repeated his last words, he answered with flashing eyes, that Sir Hugh seemed determined, that morning, to make equally large demands on his patience, and his credulity.

"Think what you please," he returned, "I have evidence in my keeping, sufficient to establish the fact beyond dispute, and if you are still incredulous, there are papers in the cabinet in my chamber, which, when

once, will leave you not the possibility of a doubt, as to the truth of my assertions."

"And knowing all this," cried the courtier, "you have contrived to keep this precious heir out of sight whilst you held quiet possession of his lands. Upon my honor, Sir Hugh, though I have always given you credit for superior talents, this is a stroke of policy, which excites even my wonder and admiration. I am only surprised you have not taken means to rid yourself entirely, of such a troublesome rival."

"I preferred letting him live, to keep a check upon my creditors, and more especially on the gentleman who considered himself my male heir," returned the Knight, with bitter irony. "It was not expedient for me, to leave only my own life between my lands and the privileged agent of the house of York."

"And do you imagine then," said Carlton, equally coolly, "that Richard the Third will allow his favourite to be robbed of his

rights by the suppositious son of an outlawed Lancastrian ?"

" Of the past, I know nothing," he returned, " but for the present I warn you, ere my nephew's claims can be denied, the sun of the House of York will have for ever set, and Henry of Richmond, on the throne of England, will do full justice to the son of a gallant Lancastrian."

" And where may be this precious boy—this heir of Collingwood ?" demanded the Secretary, with a sneer.

Sir Hugh came close to him, and whispered certain words in his ear, which made the color, for a moment, forsake his cheeks.

" And Lady Isabel knows it not ?" he hastily demanded.

" No human being knows it, save myself and a priest, who, I have reason to believe has long been dead ; and the registers of birth and marriage and such other proofs are all in my keeping."

" We must arrange this matter, Sir Hugh,"

said Carlton, as if convinced, by the force of his arguments. "It is as necessary for your interest, as for mine, that this boy should be removed from our path."

"For the plunder of the past night and a release from my debts, I am willing to keep silence," was the Knight's reply, "but I tell you frankly, I will never consent to the boy's death."

"Yet it is indispensible for our security."

"For yours perhaps, but not for mine," answered Sir Hugh. "I have remained in undisturbed possession of my lands, since the hour of his birth. I have no cause to fear his claims, and will never stain my hands with his innocent blood. Perchance such a crime may appear of little import to the king's favourite," he added sarcastically, "but I am not prepared to win even a crown, by the murder of my brother's child."

"We can talk these matters over more fully when I have seen the papers," said the Secretary.

"That you shall do without delay," was the reply. "I was on the way to visit Lady Isabel, who has taken refuge at the ruined mill, like a mad woman, as she is, instead of claiming the shelter of her son's roof; but as the tenor of my conversation with her must be greatly influenced by any compromise between us, I prefer concluding our arrangements before I proceed to this interview. Let us therefore return at once to the Tower."

"Lead the way, I am ready to follow you," said Carlton, drawing back so as to allow the Knight to pass him.

For some time these professed friends continued to ascend the valley in gloomy silence; Sir Hugh, half repenting the disclosure he had made, yet exulting that he had at length asserted his power and made the Secretary aware that his gold had not sufficed to make him his slave; but that, on the contrary, it was he who must submit and agree to any terms he might think proper to dictate.

The mind of Carlton was also too busy for words. Well aware of the Earl of Richmond's meditated invasion, and the danger which threatened the dynasty of York, he was anxious, in case of the accession of the former to the throne, to secure his personal safety, by affording him efficient aid at the most critical moment of his enterprize. In the position in which he was placed by the disclosures of Sir Hugh, and the manifest treachery of Conyers, he had no power to do so, and long practised in a political school where no impediment was allowed to stand in the way of ambition, he resolved at once to make a vigorous effort to extricate himself from his present embarrassments.

The road, after winding for some time amongst broken stones and stunted bushes, came suddenly to the brink of a precipice more than fifty feet high, where the wet and slippery path, not more than two feet wide, was overhung by a huge mass of rock, that seemed every moment about to crash down into the abyss beneath.

Carlton remarked, that Sir Hugh, probably with some feeling of apprehension, looked back upon him, ere he entered on this dangerous pass. The Secretary was close behind him, but his face was so calm and thoughtful, that without addressing him, he continued his way. If he had felt any mistrust, it was of brief duration, for he was persuaded that the existence of the next heir, rendered his death an object of no advantage to the Secretary.

No sooner was the Knight's back towards him, than a bitter smile parted the lips of Carlton, his noiseless steps were quickened, his eyes fixed like those of a serpent on its victim, and snatching his dagger, like lightning, from his girdle, he plunged it up to the hilt between the shoulders of Sir Hugh, ere he had advanced another step.

The Knight uttered a loud and piercing cry of agony, which rang far over the valley, and reached even the deep cave where Ellen and Hubert tarried on their flight; then clenching his teeth, as if he strove to master

death, by this convulsive effort of his strong nature, he turned towards his assassin and half drew his sword from its scabbard. Carlton laughed aloud.

"Curses light on thee," muttered Sir Hugh, with scarcely breath to pronounce the words, and then tottering a few paces, ere he had power to unsheath his sword, he fell backwards, without an effort to save himself, over the precipice. There was a crashing of the boughs beneath—a dull, heavy splash into the shallow waters of the brook, a few stones rolled down from the cliff, a raven flew screeching from the branch of an old elm tree, and then all was still. Carlton drew near the brink of the cliff, and saw the Knight lying with his face downwards, in the stream beneath.

"There is one thing more to be done," he thought, "and then all is safe, even if the boy were not already in my power," and without tarrying further, he took the nearest path, by which he could arrive at the spot where his victim lay. But it was not

with any anxiety to be assured of his death ; of that he had no doubt. Nothing but a most important object, could have induced him to incur the risk of being found in the neighbourhood of the body, or to lose time by such a circuit, when every moment was precious. But he felt that he had gained nothing, even by the murder of Sir Hugh Collingwood, till possessed of the important papers, the Knight had declared to be in his keeping. To obtain these, ere the death of his victim was discovered, it was absolutely necessary for him to be master of the key of the cabinet where they were concealed.

But in spite of all his haste, more than five minutes elapsed, before he reached the stream below. With as much indifference as a hired undertaker, or a paid watcher of the dead, he approached the corpse of his victim, and rifled the pockets of his doublet. He not only took thence the keys he sought, but the coin, and everything of value he found on the person of the murdered Knight. Not from any avaricious feeling, but simply,

that his death might appear to be the work of a common robber—or the deed of one of those roving parties of freebooters who haunted the borders, and in reality, placed both life and property in hourly danger in these wild districts; especially at a time, when the spirit of discontent began to be once more prevalent throughout the kingdom, and rumours of invasion and civil war had again loosened the bonds of law and social order.

But to the momentary astonishment and consternation of Carlton, he vainly looked for his own dagger, which he had expected to have found sticking in the wound; but imagining, that probably struck by some bough or rock, as the body rolled from the cliff, it was useless to lose time by searching for it amongst the weeds of that wild place; he turned away from the scene of his crime, and regained the Tower without encountering a human being on his road thither.

A private passage from his own chamber at once gave him access to Sir Hugh's apart-

ment, and fastening the bolts of the doors on the inside, to be assured against interruption, he proceeded at once to the oratory, whence hubert and Ellen had so recently escaped. Carlton knew nothing of the secret opening behind the altar; the black ebony cabinet in the recess opposite to it, alone engaged his attention, and not doubting that the papers were there to be found, he proceeded at once towards it.

Cold and callous as he was, and long practised in evil deeds, a shudder came over him, as he passed with stealthy steps the chamber of the dead. There still stood the flagon Sir Hugh Collingwood had emptied for the last time, ere he departed for the Manor House; there lay, on a cushioned seat, the rich mantle of furs he had thrown aside after his morning meal; and there on the open desk lay a half finished letter of promises to the court, and another of yet fairer offers to the Countess of Richmond, the mother of the expected invader, afterwards Henry the Seventh, the last word

broken off in the middle, the ink yet scarcely dry. And yet the hand that penned them, was already cold and stiff, and the soul of the double traitor gone to answer for his deeds at the throne of judgment. The Knight's various arms, his different garments, and the rude trophies of his chase, hung all around, as if their master only slept, and in another hour would resume his occupations and his pleasures. But he was gone for ever, and for a moment the murderer shuddered at the superstitious feeling, that the spirit of the dead was there, keeping watch upon his actions.

He was not, however, a man to yield to such weakness, and passing his hand over his brow, as if to put all idle fancies from his brain, he proceeded without further delay to the examination of the cabinet.

After trying several of the keys he had taken from the corpse, he ere long succeeded in opening its large, heavy, carved door, and found that the interior was divided into a number of small drawers, each secured by a

peculiar lock. It was a work demanding both time and patience to examine the contents of each, but the necessity of the case admitted of no hesitation, and with as much rapidity as possible, he pursued the work. A master key, he ere long discovered, greatly facilitated his task, but it was in vain that he turned over every paper the cabinet contained ; he found nothing but family letters of former generations, and farmers' accounts, it would have puzzled an Abbot's steward to decipher. One after another Carlton thrust them back impatiently into their places, till the whole had passed under his review ; and yet not a trace of the papers he sought could he discover amongst them all. But still he was convinced by the words of Sir Hugh they were there to be found, and well knowing that in such ancient articles of furniture there were frequently secret hiding places, he commenced a second search. For some time he discovered nothing to reward his trouble, but at length, on taking out one of the drawers,

he remarked that its external and internal depth were so considerably at variance, as to leave no doubt that it was constructed with a false bottom. This observation once made, the secret means of unclosing the aperture, remained not long a mystery to his keen eye, and to his infinite satisfaction, he soon found that the whole space between the two boards was entirely filled with closely folded papers.

His hand trembling with eagerness, he drew them forth, and the first words he read sufficed to convince him that he had then actually in his hand the indisputable evidence of the marriage of Reginald Collingwood, with the daughter of Lord Selwyn, and of the birth and baptism of their son. That this heir to the family lands still lived, he likewise knew, and that if once possessed of these papers, as Sir Hugh had with justice said, he could not fail, should the Earl of Richmond win the crown, to obtain the restoration of the property and honors of his ancestors.

The Knight, with some lingering feelings of conscience, had preserved the documents with the intention of doing justice on his death-bed to his brother's heir, and when he could no longer himself derive advantage from deception, to deprive Carlton of the benefit of his iniquity. When his daughter was afterwards engaged to be the wife of the Secretary, he laid this purpose aside, as he could not make up his mind to deprive his child's descendants of the inheritance, his crimes had purchased so dearly. But still, as a means of holding Carlton in check, he had carefully preserved them, little thinking that they were to prove the immediate cause of his own destruction, or dreading, that after more than twenty years of concealment and apparent enjoyment of the fruits of his iniquity, this deed of injustice was to bring down its own punishment on his head.

Carlton was not a man to be thus embarrassed by doubts and hesitations. He had come thither to obliterate, as far as in

his power, every trace of the existence of Reginald Collingwood's son, and he was no sooner possessed of the objects of his search, than he proceeded to destroy them with all possible rapidity. The fire was apparently dead, yet he was unwilling to carry on his person, even for a few minutes, an evidence sufficient to destroy the very foundations of his fortune. He closed the cabinet, put the keys in the door and drawers, as if Sir Hugh had himself so left them, and raking amongst the smouldering ashes on the hearth, succeeded at length in awakening a flame.

His hand was stretched forth to cast the papers on the blaze, when a wild clamour and confusion arose in the house; doors were thrown too with violence, voices of men and women echoed loudly from the hall, and such broken words reached his ear, as left him not a moment in doubt that the assassination of the Knight was discovered, and his body in all probability brought back to the Tower.

Not a moment was to be lost! he cast

the papers on the flames, he saw them catch fire and blaze up with violence, and then hearing steps approach the door of the outer chamber, he rushed by the private passage, with the speed of lightning to his own apartment.

## CHAPTER V.

Carlton had scarcely time to unbolt his door and seat himself, as if in profound study, before a table covered with manuscripts, ere the servants, with loud cries of horror and consternation, burst into his room, and with confused clamour, and almost unintelligible exclamations, called on him to come to the great hall, whither the body of their master, Sir Hugh Collingwood, who had been found murdered in the glen, had just been brought.

The Secretary had presence of mind to affect the utmost astonishment and consternation at this intelligence, and though his heart recoiled from looking again on the dead body of his victim, he dared not appear to shrink from such a necessary duty.

The corpse in its wet and bloody garments, lay on the great table in the centre of the Hall, where, when living, the Knight had so oft held his jovial orgies; and the ghastly face of the dead presented a fearful contrast, to those who remembered its gay and reckless expression, when he pledged his guests, in wine cups sparkling to the brim.

Carlton was prepared for all this, and as no man felt his cold and clammy hand, the well feigned expression of surprise and grief on his countenance, was sufficient to deceive the humble crowd that filled the passages leading to the ancient hall. But he was not prepared for another apparition, that awaited him there, he was not prepared to see Lady Isabel in all the mournful and solemn grandeur of a mother's woe, standing

at the head of the bier of her murdered son.

She did not weep—she made no lamentation—but profound pity, and the forgiving compassion of a superior spirit, were forcibly expressed upon her noble visage, as she kept her eyes fixed upon the corpse. She forgave the crimes of the dead, and all the agony those crimes had made her suffer; she felt that justice is in the hands of the Lord, and thought with unutterable sorrow, how the guilty man had been struck down in the midst of his career, without time for repentance or absolution. Notwithstanding the estrangement which had existed between them during his life, she could not now forget, that he was her child, and that the time had once been, when he was an innocent babe in her arms. Every feeling of enmity she had previously experienced was forgotten, and she saw only her son—her murdered son—in the ghastly form before her.

Her large, black veil hung over her head nearly to the ground, and hid in its folds

even her withered hands, which were crossed in prayer; but the light streaming from the tall, narrow casement, fell upon her beautiful, though faded visage, and Carlton as he crossed the threshold, started back appalled, when the lightning of her piercing eye fell full upon him.

His first impulse was to turn and fly; but a moment's reflection convinced him, that to betray the slightest want of fortitude at that moment, would be utter ruin; and mastering his feelings, he proceeded with a pallid face, but firm step, to take his place at the opposite side of the corpse.

The stern glance of the mother, never wavered for an instant, as she watched his approach, but every step as he drew near, the expression of indignant scorn on her countenance, waxed more intense. When he he at length stood still, she turned suddenly to the servants, who had gathered round, and pointing with calm dignity to Carlton, she said, in a voice of proud authority.

"If there be one man here, who honors

the memory of Sir Hugh Collingwood, or respects the commands of his mother, let him without another moment's delay, arrest that villain, who is his murderer! Cowards!" she continued, when, after a pause, she found that a profound silence was the only answer to her appeal, "do you hear me not, or do you dare to disobey the widow of your buried master when she demands justice against the assassin of her son? Surely if there be one man here, who has ever worn the livery of Sir Hugh in battle, or drawn his sword at his command, if there be one man amongst you, who has a spark of courage, or honesty in his heart, he will not hesitate longer to seize the base assassin of his master, and send him to meet the punishment of his foul crime, instead of leaving him free to insult the mother over the bier of her son; and whilst his hands are reeking with his victim's blood, to lord it in his castle, as the heir of the murdered."

A movement amongst the excited domestics and retainers, as she ceased speaking,

seemed to threaten the speedy execution of her wishes; but in obedience to a sign from Carlton, his own servants had already gathered in a compact band around him, and reassured by the consciousness of such a well armed guard, the Secretary eyed his adversaries with calm and supercilious contempt.

"For the love of the saints, I pray you do nothing rash, my good people," he said in a persuasive voice, that immediately arrested the movements of the excited crowd. "It is a fearful thing to violate the sanctity of the dead, by tumult and bloodshed in the presence of the unburied corpse. My own safety compels me to allude to a painful truth, which I would wish were buried in oblivion; but when Lady Isabel charges me with the assassination of her son, and I perceive you are half persuaded by her glowing language, to make me the innocent victim of her delusions, I cannot forbear to remind you of the cloud, which all men know, has for years darkened the lady's mind. At such a moment, I must

use strong words—every child in the village knows her madness—and surely no reasonable man would allow himself to be fooled by this new vision of a distracted wonan's brain. All here already know, that the Manor House was last night burnt by a band of lawless moss-troopers, and there can be little doubt, Sir Hugh Collingwood has this morning been robbed and murdered by the same ruffians."

"Yes, by the same villain, and thou art he!" said the lady, so clear and distinctly, that her words, though softly spoken, were audible to the furthest corner of the hall. Carlton continued as if he heard them not.

"It is at least more probable, that the Knight has fallen the victim of Scottish plunderers, than that I, who am an invited guest in his dwelling, and the affianced husband of his daughter, should, without enmity or quarrel, have stained my hands with the blood of my best and oldest friend."

A universal murmur of approbation and

assent, ran through the assembly, as Carlton ceased speaking,

Lady Isabel at once understood the effect his subtle words had produced, and knew that further appeal, either to the passions or reason of those present, was useless. Aware that every word she uttered, would be accounted insanity, she yet resolved to answer him.

"You no doubt exult," she said, "to find that you have already full dominion over these poor ignorant men, who may nevertheless, live to see you go to the scaffold. You exult, that by your subtle arts, you can escape the just punishment due to murder! but mad as you would have men think me, yet as surely as the serpent brought evil into the world, so surely, ere I die, will I bring down the punishment of thy crimes upon thy head. Thou shalt find too late, that thou hast shed useless blood, to win possession of the broad lands of Collingwood. There stands another living heir

betwixt thee and this fair inheritance. The son of Reginald, my first born, lives—a witness lives, who saw thee plunge thy dagger in the heart of Sir Hugh—and Henry of Richmond marches through Wales in triumph, to cast the hump-backed Richard from the throne ; when he with all the blood-stained agents of his crimes, will meet the ignominious death they merit."

" The old theme of her insanity ! her son Reginald," muttered Carlton with mingled scorn and pity ; yet loud enough to be heard by all present, and the words were not lost on the lady herself.

" Yes," she returned, " it is my old theme, and the day shall yet come, when thou shalt find, that I have not studied it in vain. I leave thee now to thy triumph, guilty man—Command, whilst yet thou canst ! rob the heir of his rights, and drive the orphan from the roof of her fathers ; this canst thou dare to do, and ten times worse, since thou hast ventured to come into the presence of

that murdered corpse, nor feared to see the rushing blood burst from the lifeless veins, to prove beyond dispute, that it was the assassin who approached the dead. Yes, I leave thee to thy triumph! Lay him, whom thou hast murdered, in the grave with all the mockery of honor and grief! such shows are common things, and then prepare to answer for thy deeds. Here I may be powerless—here thy voice may suffice to cheat the common herd to think me mad—the seats of justice may now be so corrupted that an appeal to their authority may for awhile be vain, but England ere long will have a higher tribunal, where the claims of the widow and the orphan may yet prevail, against all the strength of wickedness, intrigue and gold. Then shall we meet again, and not till then!"

No sound was to be heard throughout the vast apartment when the lady ceased speaking. All the ancient retainers of her house were awed and troubled by her words; yet, the long established belief of her insanity,

which Carlton had so adroitly turned to his advantage, prevented any man implicitly believing the accusations she brought against him.

The Secretary himself remained silent, for he judged it most expedient to avoid further discussion, and to allow her to depart in peace. Though astonished to find her acquainted with the existence of the real heir, he cared little for her threats, whilst the youth himself was in his power. Had he known that the assertions of Lady Isabel, with regard to Reginald's child, were only grounded on the vague words of the dying miller, he would have been as entirely convinced of her madness, as he professed himself to be ; but under every circumstance, he relied so confidently on his skill in political intrigue, as to have no apprehension of evil consequences, from the worst efforts of her ill will.

Nevertheless, his satisfaction was great, when, after one long, silent look of agony,

she turned away from the dead, and making a slight movement with her hand, for the crowd around her to divide, she passed down the hall amidst the wondering throng, with a calm and noble grace, which commanded the respect even of those, who were the most persuaded of her insanity.

For a few moments after her disappearance there was a deep silence. All felt that the mother of the dead had departed—all but Carlton—he thought of nothing but the authority it was now his turn to exercise, and the first words he spoke, were to give orders for hanging the apartment with black —preparing a coffin, and summoning the monks from the nearest monasteries, to do all honor to the deceased, and perform the sacred rights of religion in the most pompous manner.

He appeared to think it entirely unnecessary to consult Ellen on any of these points, and as every one knew the lands of the family descended to him, no one presumed to dispute his commands.

He was not present when the orphan visited the hall, to look for the last time on her father's corpse—he had descended with Tom Reed to the vault where they believed Hubert to be still a prisoner.

## CHAPTER VI.

When Ellen saw Hubert depart under the guidance of Marion, all joy, all hope seemed to vanish with him. The love which had sustained her, during their first separation, to resist the tyranny of her father, and the detestable attentions of Carlton, was now only another source of despair. The fair dreams of her young heart were destroyed, and he, whose affection had supplied to her the want of mother, sister, and all the ten-

der sympathies of loving kindred, was divided from her for ever. Weighed down by an affliction which was too heavy even for tears, she returned after the disappearance of Hubert with slow and reluctant steps into the cavern.

As she re-trod alone, the damp and dreary underground passages to the Tower, the remembrance of the wild and appalling cry she had heard from the woods, recurred repeatedly to her mind. She could not doubt that it was the death wail of one who died in agony. The agitation of Marion had increased her terrors, whilst the strange warnings she had given her, excited a train of troubled ideas she vainly strove to banish. She dreaded to hear some new and awful calamity, when she regained her home, and slowly and with troubled heart she remounted the steps leading to her father's oratory.

On reaching the top, ere she laid her finger on the spring of the secret panel, she cautiously looked through a hole in the carved

frame work, to ascertain if the room were still empty. To her horror she beheld Carlton, at only a few paces from her, in the act of unclosing her father's cabinet.

She recognised the keys in his hand, which she well knew Sir Hugh never gave from his possession. Her heart beat wild with terror and indignation against the spoiler, yet she had the courage and command over herself, to remain perfectly still. She saw him open the drawers and rifle every paper they contained, but without appropriating a particle of all he examined. He was evidently searching for something he failed to discover, and she rejoiced at his disappointment, when to her surprise he prepared to set fire to the last packet he had unfolded.

Convinced from her knowlege of his character, and the evident secrecy of his proceedings, that he was engaged in executing some purpose of evil ; remembering likewise the warnings of Marion, she was about to spring from her hiding place to make an

effort to save her father's papers from the flames, when a confusion and clamour in the house, of a most unwonted nature, equally interrupted the proceedings of Carlton, and for a time diverted her attention.

She heard her father's name pronounced in tones of lamentation and terror, and the Secretary had no sooner vanished from the oratory, than she hurried out with breathless anxiety and haste from behind the Altar. But though the sounds in the great hall were more than ever alarming, she, even in that moment of trouble, had presence of mind, to rush to the chimney, to snatch thence, the remnants of the blazing papers, and tread out the flames, which consumed them. This done, small indeed were the particles that remained; but these she had hastily gathered together, and with trembling hands concealed in her bosom, when Peggy entered with loud cries of distress and terror, by the back entrance, into the oratory.

Without either feeling, or delicacy, the waiting woman at once announced the cause

of the tumult, and called on Ellen to come to her chamber, ere the servants, who carried her father's body, ascended to the hall. But the lady answered her not—overwhelmed by a calamity so awful and unexpected, she fell insensible, and apparently lifeless at her feet.

When Ellen at length recovered from her long and fearful swoon, she was lying on the bed in her own chamber, and a figure in mourning garments, which swept like a dark cloud around her person, down to the very ground, was bending over her with evident anxiety.

Her first impression was, that she beheld a vision, but as her senses recovered their usual vigour, she knew that it was Lady Isabel—her father's widowed mother—the last of her race. Overcome by her presence, at a moment of such utter desolation and despair, she no sooner recognised her, than stretching out her arms towards her, she cast herself with a cry of anguish on her

neck, and burst into a passionate flood of tears.

"You know all?" faintly demanded Lady Isabel, when the first violence of her grief had passed.

"I know that he is murdered," she replied in a voice so stifled by tears, as to be scarcely audible.

"Aye, all the evil he has done is fearfully expiated," she returned, solemnly. "Unprepared, he has been sent before the Judgment seat of the Lord, by the vile ruffian whom he called his friend."

"By Carlton?" exclaimed Ellen, "he cannot be such a monster!" and yet the remembrance of all she had seen in the oratory chilled her heart as she spoke.

"Yes, he is the assassin," replied the Lady Isabel, the page of Conyers, was witness of the deed. He believes himself the male heir of my son, and now reigns master in this wretched house. I have seen him, Ellen—I have accused him face to face of

the crime, and though he turned my accusations all aside, upon the plea of madness, the hour shall come, when thou and I shall win a rich revenge. Meanwhile, my child, this is no home for thee. Thy handmaid, even, is his purchased creature, and the whole house is polluted by his infamous menials. Thou must hence with me, Ellen, ere he can take means to prevent thee."

"Thanks, a thousand thanks!" returned the girl, repeatedly kissing the withered hand of her grandmother, "forgive me, if my anguish robs me of words to tell you all I feel; but I thank you with my whole heart."

"Poor child!—thou art yet young in affliction, but thou must be composed; and remember we have powerful friends. I thank my God, that he has spared me in my old age to be thy support and protection. Canst thou arise, Ellen, my child? every moment we tarry here, is full of agony to me!"

"Yes, yes, I am strong now," replied the

girl, raising herself from her bed. "But Madam, I would fain look on my father's face, ere I depart. It will be for the last time upon earth."

"Carlton was in the hall when I left it," answered Lady Isabel, "but if it be possible for you to go thither without seeing him, you shall do so."

One of the humble servants of the household, who had replaced Peggy in Ellen's chamber, was immediately sent to observe the movements of the Secretary, and when she returned with the tidings that he was engaged in his own apartment, the orphan proceeded on her mournful errand. Even Lady Isabel did not accompany her, for though it was a great and painful trial, for one so young to look for the first time upon the dead, and that in the person of her murdered parent, she preferred encountering it alone.

When, after a lapse of a quarter of an hour, Ellen again appeared, the traces of tears were on her flushed cheeks; but she

spoke not of what had passed, and Lady Isabel forbore to question her. With a softer smile than Ellen had ever before seen on her withered features, she advanced to meet her, and taking her hand in hers, proposed that they should at once depart.

"I have made all the necessary arrangements for your removal," she said, "and when we reach the mill, we will consider, whither next our steps are to be directed."

The entrance of several servants, prevented further conversation, and Ellen, who was not less anxious to escape all chance of an interview with Carlton, than Lady Isabel to quit the mansion, yielded at once to her wishes, and escorted by two of the oldest and most faithful domestics of the establishment, the widow and the orphan left the dwelling place of their youth.

Each engrossed by her own sad feelings, the walk to the mill was performed in silence; and the first thing which diverted their thoughts from the fearful event of the morning, and the changes it had produced,

was the appearance of Conyers anxiously awaiting them near the ruin.

When he had heard from Marion of the assassination of Sir Hugh, he had at once given up his intention of accompanying Hubert as a guide over the hills, and returned to inform Lady Isabel of the fearful occurrence. Her first impulse had been to hasten to give Ellen her support under such a trial, and owing to the confusion amongst the servants, whom Marion had sent in search of their master's body, she arrived at the Tower almost at the same moment with the sad procession, which bore the corpse of the murdered Knight to the house of his fathers. But Ellen who knew nothing of all this, save that Conyers was to be the companion of Hubert's flight, eagerly inquired if aught untoward had occurred to prevent it.

It was some consolation to her, amidst all her troubles, to learn that the object of her love, was probably, ere then, far beyond the reach of immediate pursuit; and tranquillised on this point, she listened with

more composure, to the urgent instances of the soldier, for herself and Lady Isabel to leave the neighbourhood with all possible secrecy and dispatch.

The latter alone objected.

"There is only one thing makes me hesitate to depart," she said, "I have reason to think there were papers in Sir Hugh's keeping, which I would give half my gold to possess; and though Carlton may be heir to the land, the daughter of the deceased, has a right to all the personal effects the house contains."

"This is no time to claim them," said the trooper drily, "and matters I suspect must be greatly changed throughout the kingdom, before there is the slightest chance of her demands being attended to."

"Let him take all of value," she answered. "Ellen is rich enough to leave him such plunder—but there are papers, Conyers, papers——"

"Which if of consequence, he will not

fail to destroy," he rejoined, somewhat abruptly interrupting her.

"That he has already done so, I was myself a witness," said Ellen, and in rapid words, she recounted all she had seen in the oratory.

"And the fragments ?" eagerly demanded Lady Isabel.

"Are here," she replied, and taking the remnants of the burnt papers from her bosom, she gave them into the trembling hands of her grandmother.

"Oh Ellen ! Ellen !" cried the lady in an agitated voice, as she surveyed them, "from what sorrow and anguish hadst thou probably rescued thyself and me, hadst thou snatched these precious documents one moment sooner from the flames. The fate of Hubert Saville probably depended on their contents ; and now only a few scattered words remain, to excite curiosity and regret, without adding in the slightest degree, to our previous knowledge of his parentage."

"Alas, till Carlton quitted the oratory, I could do nothing," replied the girl; "but here is another scrap, Madam, and the name of Hubert followed by a Cis——distinctly visible, whilst lower down are parts of two words ——garet Sel——"

"Margaret Selwyn! oh Holy Saints, his mother's name!" exclaimed Lady Isabel, eagerly gazing on the half illegible letters, of the precious fragment. "For me that is enough!" she added, in that wild manner which had greatly contributed to the general persuasion of her insanity, "and, oh, just heaven, it is my earnest prayer, that I may yet be spared, till this iniquitous mystery is fully brought to light. Thou hast thy special times, and ways of vengeance, oh Lord! but in this I implore thee, let me be made thy instrument!" and sinking into a kind of dreaming insensibility, such as she was often subject to, since age had come upon her; it was in vain that Ellen and Conyers endeavoured to obtain from her, any explanation of her mysterious allusions.

The soldier regarded all she had uttered, as the effect of delusion, but Ellen's happiness was too deeply implicated in the mystery of Hubert's birth, and all that tended to establish or disprove the fact of his being her father's son, not to lend an eager and willing ear to everything that tended to disprove it. But alas! as far as she could discover, there was nothing in the fragments to encourage a hope that the tale of Father Ambrose was false. If the papers related to the child of Sir Hugh, it was not wonderful they should have been found in his cabinet, and though Saville was not the name of the mother, it was probably one assumed to elude suspicion. Yet, why Carlton should think these writings of such vast importance, as to hurry to their destruction, whilst the blood of murder was yet reeking on his hands, was a fact for which she was utterly at a loss to account, when she considered that the alleged illegitimacy of Hubert, was sufficient to secure the inherit-

ance of the lands, without dispute, to the Secretary.

It was in vain she sought any explanation from Conyers; he knew nothing of the history of Reginald and his child. His father and Lady Isabel's brothers, had served together in the Lancastrian cause, and convinced of his zeal and military talents, the lady had recently advanced him considerable sums, to collect a troop, at her expence, for the service of Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, in his effort to wrest the crown from Richard the Third, and re-establish the Lancastrian party in their former honors and authority. A gallant body of tall, fighting men were ready to assemble at the first summons of Conyers, when Carlton commissioned him to collect a similar band for the service of the king, and though to prevent the Secretary's making a similar application to others, the soldier pretended to accede to his proposition, it is scarcely necessary to say, that it was without any

intention of proving false to the cause of Tudor, or the mistress to whom he had previously promised his services. Pleased with Hubert's appearance and manner, he had readily agreed to Lady Isabel's proposition of appointing him one of the officers of his company, but the cause of the deep interest she took in the fortunes of the youth, was entirely unknown to him.

When Lady Isabel again awoke to a consciousness of passing events, she pointedly avoided all recurrence to a subject, which she was well aware rendered her incapable of the activity and clearness of judgment, so indispensably necessary at a time when she felt, the success of all she most desired, depended on her exertions.

She pronounced at once, her determination to depart without further loss of time, and after a brief consultation with Conyers, she agreed that his Tower in the valley of Redesdale, should be the first stage of their journey ; from whence their further progress

must be directed by public events. Even were the soldier compelled to put himself immediately at the head of his troop, and march southward to join the invader, whose landing was now daily expected by his partizans, he protested the ladies could find no safer quarters, than in his old stone fortress, in the midst of a wild district, where an enemy feared to penetrate, and even outlaws were exempt from pursuit.

Ellen was astonished, when she beheld the energy with which her aged relative made the preparations necessary for her arduous journey in search of a new home amongst strangers, where unknown adventures and unknown changes awaited her, of a nature and importance, such as even youth itself had need of all its strength to struggle with. Rising with unshrinking resolution above her misfortunes, when they apparently gathered most darkly around her, and endowed with force by the very magnitude of the difficulties she had to encounter, she seemed awakened to a second life, inspired by a

new soul, and aroused by the pressure of necessity to regain the courage, resolution, and energy of her early years. Once more, after a long lapse of time, like a setting sun that bursts from a cloudy veil before it sets, and pours, for a brief space, a flood of light, whose glory is redoubled by the darkness near, her powerful intellect shone forth in all its power. Calm and simple, there was a nobility and decision in all she did and said, that made even Conyers obey her like a child.

By their joint directions, all was speedily arranged for their journey, and she who had not ridden for more than twenty years, mounted, without hesitation, a palfrey belonging to the soldier. Other horses had been procured from the neighbourhood for Ellen, Conyers, and the servants who accompanied them, and only Marion, and Hannah the old housekeeper, remained behind; the one to perform a commission for the soldier, the other to attend the

funeral of her brother, old Andrew the miller.

In silence, and with many anxious thoughts, the little party left the ruined mill, and before sunset they had proceeded so far over the hills, that the Tower with its surrounding woods, and the blackened ruins of the Manor House were no longer discernible amidst the blue vapours of the distance.

## CHAPTER VII.

HUBERT would willingly have postponed his flight, when he heard the dreadful tidings of Sir Hugh Collingwood's assassination, but Conyers, in obedience to Lady Isabel's orders, would hear of no delay. But instead of his proceeding to join the troop he had raised, he advised him, in consequence of the events of the past night, to ride south as rapidly as his strength permitted. The young man resolutely refused to accept the

gold which his patroness had sent him for his journey, having, he said, sufficient of his own savings, to last till the chances of war replenished his purse; but he received with many expressions of gratitude, certain important letters of recommendation, concealed in a hollow staff which Conyers gave him, with strict injunctions not to open it, till he reached York, as it contained other papers, which if lost might compromise some of his best friends.

"And how shall I receive tidings of the friends I leave behind, under such fearful circumstances?" he eagerly demanded.

"When you have joined those to whose care you are recommended in those letters," answered the soldier, "we shall, in all probability, speedily meet, or you will hear news from the North. But remember, Hubert, you must travel with caution and avoid observation as much as possible; were those papers found in your possession, your head would be the forfeit. Keep to the west of Brinkbourne over the Moors, and avoid all

public roads, as much as possible. Caution and speed be your motto—Farewell !"

"Express my gratitude and thanks to Lady Isabel, and guard her and her granddaughter faithfully, during my absence," was Hubert's reply, and waving his cap as a parting salutation to Conyers and Marion, he turned his horse's head to the south, and rode off at a rapid pace.

There is something inexpressibly melancholy in beholding a friend thus pass away like a shadow from before us; it has a foretaste of the tomb! as the figure rapidly diminishes, till in a brief space it hath utterly vanished, it brings directly to our mind the flitting nature of all sublunary things, and the painful consciousness that even friendship and love are only passing sunbeams athwart our path, which however ardent the desire of our hearts to retain them, are perpetually obscured by the changing fortunes of existence.

Such a feeling filled Marion's eyes with tears, when after gazing on the departing

form of Hubert, for a few moments she suddenly turned their full, dark lustre on her companion. She thought of the hour when they might be compelled to separate, perhaps for ever. Conyers evidently understood their expression otherwise, for he replied to the glance, by assuring her that the youth would speedily be beyond the reach of pursuit.

"He is a gallant fellow," he added, "and if his luck in the civil war, impending over the kingdom, be equal to his merit, we shall live, I trust, to see him hold a high and honorable place amongst the ranks of England's noble defenders, so have no more anxiety for him, my brave girl."

Marion answered not — she saw her thoughts were mistaken, and though she made no effort to undeceive her companion, her anguish, whatever might be its cause, was thereby redoubled, and being utterly incapable of discoursing on other subjects, she followed Conyers in silence to the mill.

Hubert, meanwhile, pursued his way rapidly over the moors. In spite of his recent wounds, in spite of his anxiety for Ellen and the uncertainty of his own fate, the fleet motion of the spirited animal he bestrode, through the clear, pure air of the hills, was so invigorating and inspiring, that he ere long forgot his weakness, and the cares which at the commencement of his journey pressed heavily on his mind. As his horse bounded along the green and flowery turf, and he flew like a winged creature over the hills he had often trodden with weary footsteps, when he saw the clouds flitting past him, and the wide landscape extended at his feet, as far as the eye could reach, until it mingled with the ocean and the sky, he remembered no more the sorrows of his boyhood, nor the passionate anguish of his riper years. His heart leapt within him, with a sentiment of strength and power he had never known till then. He felt that he was at length free, that the trammels of subjection and bondage he had

long, from necessity, endured, were burst for ever, and a new existence, a new world opened before him.

Bright as the plains beneath, where nought but sunshine was distinctly visible, appeared that world to him; he had yet to learn how often both are fraught with disappointment, as the traveller with weary footsteps, approaches the objects he had gazed at with longing from afar. But nothing noble—nothing great could ever be attained in this world without the bliss of self delusion. Were all men philosophers and contented like Diogenes with his tub, neither arts, nor sciences, nor literature, had contributed to ameliorate the physical condition of man, nor to alleviate by imaginative pleasures, the positive sufferings attendant on existence. Youth, the season of combats and struggles, when the present must frequently be painfully employed to secure a provision for the necessities of age, has especially need of these delusions, and Hubert, without them,

had retired broken hearted into a convent, or sunk into an early grave.

Ere the close of evening, he could even think of Ellen without despair, and remembering the doubts of their consanguinity entertained by Lady Isabel, he built many a fair castle on this slight foundation.

As long as the sun was above the horizon, he found no difficulty in travelling over that open and desolate country, except the occasional necessity of deviating from the direct line, to avoid some marsh or standing water. But as the shades of evening gathered around him, and he no longer had the sun for a guide, he felt the necessity of finding some beaten tract to the south. Vain however was his search ; he could distinguish nothing through the gloom, save the furze and the heather that covered the whole surface of the ground around him.

His jaded horse seemed to understand the trouble and perplexity of its master, and paused more than once, where some slight

opening appeared, as if to ascertain if it led to a place of shelter ; and bewildered in the darkness, Hubert at length laid the reins on its neck, and left it free to follow the course its sagacity directed it to chose. Though Peggy's cordials and the keen mountain air, had enabled him to support the fatigues of the day ; his weakness now returned, and a sense of exhaustion, painfully replaced the feverish excitement by which he had hitherto been sustained.

He felt that the shelter of the humblest shepherd's hut, would be preferable to passing the night without food, or resting place, in the middle of that wide moor ; and though he despaired of his voice reaching any human ear, he from time to time shouted loud, and long, whilst his horse with slow and cautious steps proceeded over the uneven ground.

But no sound made reply to his calls, save the moaning of the wind, which, as if awakened from some cavern of sleep amongst the hills, burst suddenly forth at intervals, into

long, wild moans, and then rushing past him with dismal howlings, left a silence yet more dreary than before. Heavy drops, ere long, were borne upon the blast, vivid lightnings flashed from the lowering clouds, and the loud thunder was rapidly followed by a torrent of rain.

Neither shelter, nor escape could be hoped for, and Hubert had no other source under this new difficulty, than to turn his back to the pelting storm, and wait on the same spot, till its violence had abated. More than half an hour thus elapsed, ere he was able to continue his way. His garments were perfectly saturated with wet, and weary and faint from his wounds and long want of food, he had scarcely strength to lift up his voice once more, to call for help.

It would be impossible to say, whether his joy, or his surprise was greatest, when his feeble cry was answered by a long, shrill whistle; it was evidently from a person at no great distance, and was speedily followed by a human voice, which, close at his side,

demanded who was there, at that hour of the night.

"A traveller who has lost his way," answered Hubert eagerly.

"If he is astride a horse, as you seem to be," returned the voice, "he has wandered far astray, in truth, for I will be sworn there is no four legged creature, but a sheep and a hare, that hath trodden the moor in my life time, within four miles of this spot."

"Likely enough," said Hubert, "but I trust there is some dwelling place nearer at hand, for both I and my horse have urgent need of food and shelter."

"My mother and I have a hut on the hill side, not far from hence," was the reply, "where you will be right welcome, if you will kindly take me on your horse, for I have had the ill luck to sprain my ancle in springing over a swamp, and have lain here these two hours, without hope of aid till morning."

Hubert readily agreed to this proposal,

and descending from his horse, and approaching the spot whence the voice proceeded, he distinguished by the light of the stars, a man lying on the ground. Quickly assisting the unknown to take his place on the saddle, and inquiring from him the direction in which his cottage lay, he took the bridle of his gelding in his hand, and resumed his way on foot.

As they proceeded, the peasant put many and rapid questions, to which Hubert was little disposed to reply, and his delight was great, when at the end of a quarter of an hour, the glimmering of a feeble light before them, attracted the attention of his companion.

"There is my home," said the stranger, "you could not see the light till we turned the point of the hill. It is no easy matter, at any time, to find it without a guide, and I only marvel how you made your way through all the pools, and marshes, and stones that cover the moors."

"I must thank my horse more than myself, I believe," replied Hubert, "and in

truth, I am right glad to have a prospect of shelter, for I am weary and faint."

"Mayhap for want of food," said the other, "but if you will help me to the ground, we shall soon see a good supper before us, I trust."

"Ha! Thomas art thou there at last!" cried an old woman, who no sooner heard voices before the door, than she came forth with a light to welcome her long expected son, "and mounted on a stranger's horse! what has happened to keep thee so late abroad, and bring thee back in such company?"

"Without this kind traveller's help, I had not returned to-night, my good mother," answered the young shepherd. "I fell, I know not how, in leaping over a pool, and lay three hours calling for help, till this stranger, having lost his way, began to make a louder clamour than I upon the hills; as if we had both fallen into mischance, for the sake of helping one another."

"Thou wert ever more witty than wise," said the woman, "but since the stranger

and his horse are here, Joe must take a light, and show him the stable."

Hubert gladly followed the boy, thus assigned him as a guide, and saw with satisfaction that his weary steed had a good truss of hay before him, and a bed of dry heather, ere he himself entered the cottage in search of refreshment.

When he did so, the light of the faggots blazing on the heath, gave him an excellent opportunity of surveying his hostess, who was anxiously preparing remedies for the hurt her son had received.

She was apparently about fifty years of age, strong, active, and full of vivacity ; her keen black eyes were still bright, and when combined with her regular, though somewhat strongly marked features, bespoke a character replete with intellect, and resolution, such as was little to be expected in such a habitation. She was clothed in coarse woollen garments, yet it was evident that she was not only prompt to decide, but accustomed to command ; and her whole manner ill accorded with her garb, or dwelling. Neither

she, nor her son, spoke with a true Northumbrian accent, although they both affected it, and the young man, though of softer and gentler bearing than his mother, was equally superior to his apparent station.

Hubert soon had little doubt, that he had intruded on the hiding place of the remnant of some noble Lancastrian family, who sought to elude the vengeance of the House of York; and his suspicions were confirmed, when he saw that his hostess, when she thought herself unobserved, reproached her son for bringing a stranger within their walls. He heard not the words she uttered, but her gestures betrayed their import, and it was with no very gentle courtesy that she placed the supper before him, which had long been prepared for her son.

The respect with which Hubert involuntarily treated one, whom he considered noble, and in misfortune, seemed still more to provoke her anger, and it was with evident anxiety that the young shepherd strove to make up by his attentions to his guest, for his mother's want of hospitality. He

apologized that their meal consisted of nothing but oatmeal porridge and milk ; but Hubert assured him he had long been used to such fare.

" You come from the north, do you not ?" demanded the shepherd.

" From Bellinghem !" was the reply.

" Ha, then you are probably travelling south, as a messenger from Sir Hugh Collingwood to the court ?" said his mother.

" I am not," was Hubert's brief reply.

" Yet our sheep boy tells me, you ride a horse of price," she returned, " and neither your language, nor your dress, are those of the rude peasants from Cheviot side. But your arm is bound up, young man ! what means that ? your coat is stained with blood, and now the light falls on your face, I see that you are deadly pale ! whence comes all this ; is the country already in arms, or art thou a criminal flying from justice ?"

" Neither," answered the young man, simply. " The house of Lady Isabel Collingwood—"

" Ha ! the widow of old Sir Ralph ?"

"The same."

"Speak briefly all that concerns her. She is a noble lady."

"Her house was last night attacked and burnt, and in its defence I was thus wounded," replied Hubert, who was somewhat embarrassed at being thus closely questioned as to his history.

"And she escaped?" cried his hostess, quickly.

"Happily she did," he returned.

"And her assailants—?"

"Were dispersed."

"They were Scots, no doubt?"

"On the contrary, there is reason to think they were private and personal enemies."

"What says her son, Sir Hugh, to the affair?"

"It was asserted, ere I departed, that he had fallen by the hand of an assassin, and that Master Carlton, as his male heir, would take possession of the house and lands."

"All this is strange intelligence," said the woman, eyeing her guest more suspi-

ciously than before ; " and yet I see nothing therein to account for your riding at midnight over the moors, exhausted, and wounded, as if the king's executioner were at your heels."

" It is by the desire of Lady Isabel," said Hubert, not knowing what better answer to make.

" Canst thou give me any proof of that ?" demanded his hostess.

" Mother, thou hast no right to put such a question," said the young shepherd anxiously interposing.

" Yet surely in spite of all your fine feelings and nonsense, I have a right to know whether I am harbouring a friend, or an enemy," she replied ; " whether I am assisting an honest man, or must be on my guard against a spy."

" If he be the latter, you can scarcely expect to be informed of it by his own lips," said the youth, mildly.

" He will be more cunning than thou art, if he deceive me," was her answer. " You must admit, that I have at least had more

experience than has fallen to your lot."

The young man bowed, as if he had been bred in a court, but said nothing. The little, brisk woman, then, with an expression of perfect self satisfaction, turned towards her guest, and continued her questioning and cross-questioning with such zeal and activity during the next hour, that she contrived to wring from Hubert's unwilling lips, the principal parts of his history.

Several passages of his narrative seemed to interest her most deeply, but though she was infinitely more courteous after this conversation, than before, yet, when he laid his weary head upon his humble pillow, he bitterly repented that he had been thus enticed to betray so much regarding himself, to a person, who though evidently not what she wished to appear, yet placed no confidence in him in return. Every word he had uttered uprose like an upbraiding spirit before him—he feared that he had betrayed his friends even more than himself; he figured a thousand evil consequences to arise from his imprudent disclosures, and though he slept

at last, his self reproaches pursued him even in his dreams.

When he awoke, the morning sun was shining bright into the loft, where his bed had been spread near that of his young host. The shepherd had already arisen and departed, and Hubert was delighted, when he sprang up and dressed himself with haste, to find that sleep had completely restored his strength.

Curious as to the place and persons who had given him shelter, he eagerly gazed from the low window, on the surrounding landscape ; but green uncultivated, treeless hills, shut out all view of the surrounding country. Voices were audible below, and ere long he saw a Franciscan friar in the dress of his order, leave the cottage, and proceed with rapid steps a path up towards the west. He then turned with the intention of proceeding to the kitchen, but as he did so, his sword caught in a part of the rude woodwork near, and as he endeavoured to release it, two boards fell with a tremendous clatter

to the ground. A kind of closet was thus disclosed to view, in which, to Hubert's surprise, he saw suspended the complete armour of a Knight, richly embossed with gold. Above the arms, which were engraved on the shield with exquisite workmanship, was a Baron's coronet. He was still lost in admiration of this splendid harness, when he heard a step behind him, and the voice of his hostess abruptly demanded what he was doing there. He replied with many apologies for the accident which had happened, of which taking no notice, she coldly desired him to assist her in replacing the boards, and when this was done led the way to the kitchen without pronouncing a syllable. Her son had already finished his breakfast, and was busily engaged sharpening a battle axe, when they entered.

"He knows much and had better know more," said the woman, abruptly addressing him, when they had descended the ladder which formed the only staircase.

"As you please, mother," was his reply, "I only know I cannot go on foot."

"Then sit down to your breakfast," she said, addressing Hubert, "and hear what I have to say to you. Perhaps you have already some suspicion that my son was not born to be a shepherd, and trusting, that in return for our hospitality, you will not betray our secret, I venture to tell you, that his father was one of the first nobles of the land. It is long since he fell fighting for his lawful king, on the field of battle, yet such had been his deeds when living, that there was no safety for his young son, from the revengeful pursuit of his enemies, except in this disguise. I fled hither with him: our little gold was soon exhausted, but a mother's heart is strong, and I worked. As my boy grew older he likewise learned to toil, and those who saw us here, believed that we were peasants like themselves. Yet by the help of a friar, the only living creature who knows our secret, I trust I have given him an education not unworthy of his

ancestors, and to-morrow he would have departed hence to revenge his father's fate, under the standard of the Earl of Richmond, who has already landed at Milford Haven, to drive Richard and the race of York from the throne. But to-morrow will be too late —for our friend, the priest, has this morning warned me that a party of Lord Northumberland's men, on whose lands we dwell, will be here within the hour, to carry off my boy as a recruit to join the royal army. I would sooner see him die!"

"Why should he tarry here till then?" demanded Hubert.

"Were he to depart on foot, lame as he is, he would be sure to be arrested," she eagerly returned, "for parties of the royalists are spread all over the hills, collecting the unwilling peasantry to join their standards, It is only disguised and on horseback, that there is any chance of his escape."

Hubert looked keenly at his hostess, whose meaning he now fully comprehended, and his reflections of the preceding night were

not without effect. He was at once on his guard.

"Your horse has been well fed during the night," continued his hostess, when she found he returned no answer, "and you appear greatly refreshed. Now we will ask no payment, either for your food or lodging, but in return, my son can ride your horse to Morpeth, to wait your arrival."

"On foot!" answered Hubert, drily. "I am infinitely obliged to you for this arrangement; and in the meantime, Lord Northumberland's men may take me for your son, and march me off to join the royal army. The idea is most excellent, but I prefer riding my own gelding, and pursuing my journey in my own way. For your food and shelter I thank you, and at the same time, am both ready and willing to pay for both."

"You are proud, young man," said his hostess, haughtily, "but let me tell you, your pride is out of place. My house is

not an inn, that I was obliged to open my door to you for any paltry payment, and he who is not too proud to receive a benefit, has no right to be too proud to return it."

"Mother! mother!" cried her son, interposing, "your warmth is most ill-timed; if there has been any benefit conferred, it is by this young stranger! you seem to forget that without his aid, I should be lying at this moment helpless, and half famished, on the hill side. You ask too much, as I before told you! and what right have we to imagine, that his time is of so little value, that he can retrace his journey at our pleasure."

"I thank you for this generous defence," said Hubert, frankly holding out his hand to the shepherd, "and be assured, I am ready to do all in my power to assist you; but to put myself in your place, and follow the standard of Northumberland, implies a sacrifice of honor and principle, to an overstrained sentiment of gratitude, which I am not prepared to make. I would rather die,

than join the ranks of the tyrant, and I have friends, whom it is my duty to consider as well as myself."

"You are right, perfectly right," rejoined the pretended peasant. "It is a time when each man has difficulties enough to encounter, without taking on himself the trials of others."

"Yet your door was open to me in time of need," said Hubert, "and I am ready to aid you, as much as I can do with honor; your mother spoke of your being disguised, it is not therefore absolutely necessary that you should wear my clothes—nor, if you go to Morpeth on horseback, need you ride thither alone!"

"What do mean by these insinuations?" demanded his hostess impatiently.

"I mean," said Hubert, "that your son's best chance of escape, will be to put on a suit of your garments, and ride behind me, as my wife, to Morpeth. If we are stopped on the way, I can say I am going to join the king's army, and mean to leave my wife,

with her friends at Newcastle, on the way. But should the fellows be insolent, I have a bow and a battle axe, and with my good steed even doubly burthened, will engage to get clear of a dozen footmen, ere they can let fly their arrows."

"You are a brave youth after all !" cried the woman springing up, "and have more sense and character, than I gave you credit for, last night. Your plan is worth ten of mine, so go my boy, and put on my old woollen kirtle, with all speed, and tie this kerchief over thy head, whilst the stranger gets ready his horse, for there is not a moment to be lost."

All this was soon done, and when Hubert brought his horse to the door, he could not help laughing at the change effected, during a few minutes, in the appearance of the young shepherd, whom even he, could no longer recognize, in his female attire.

But the mirth of Hubert at the success of his proposition, was quickly checked, when he marked the anguish with which

the mother parted from her only son—the last of a long line of nobles, who had for centuries contributed, by their deeds, to the honor and greatness of the English throne. She, who had recently been brisk, active and loquacious, so imperious and so decided—was overwhelmed with the deepest grief. She remembered the day, when she had seen her husband go forth to battle, never more to return ; she remembered all the dangers, trials and deprivations she had undergone since then, to save that only child from the pursuit of his enemies, and for a brief space she felt, as if all had been in vain, and that the hour had come that was to rob her for ever of this, her last treasure upon earth. She pressed him in her arms, she moistened his kerchief with her tears ; whilst Hubert stood patiently waiting, till the first burst of her passionate anguish had passed.

" Mother, dear mother," said her son, scarcely less, affected than herself, " be assured all will go well. Heaven will not

forsake us, and we shall meet again, when the righteous cause has triumphed."

"I will hope my child," she returned, "as I have long hoped, or the earth had covered me ere now—so go my son—I can weep alone, and must not delay thee. May the saints guard thee, and give thee brighter fortune than thy noble father found."

So saying, she embraced him with such feelings, as none but a mother can know; and then withdrawing a few paces, pointed to the horse which his companion had already mounted. The youth understood her, and silently sprang on the seat which Hubert had hastily formed of hay, and an old cloth he had found in the stable.

"Farewell, my son! Forget not, that your father swore by the ghost of his murdered Sire, eternal hatred to the house of York."

These were the last words of the distracted mother; she waved her hand, Hubert urged forward his horse, and they parted—his curiosity more than ever excited as to the

history and parentage of his companion. The young man turned to take a last look of the lonely woman. She was lying, apparently lifeless, on the ground ; but though he vehemently insisted on returning to aid her, Hubert, well aware, both of the danger and inutility of such a proceeding, only made his horse gallop the faster down the valley, and assured him that all would ere long be well.

Nor was it in fact long, till the good woman, with recovered consciousness, arose, and taking her place at her spinning wheel, awaited with external tranquillity, the arrival of Lord Northumberland's soldiers.

All that day the young men continued their way, by cross roads well known to the shepherd, without meeting with any obstruction, or difficulty. Once only they tarried for the refreshment of their horse; yet it was already dusk are they arrived at the gates of Newcastle.

Fearful of entering any public inn, they were for some time at a loss which way to

turn, when they passed under the low, gothic arch, standing in those days between Pilgrim street, and the few scattered houses without the walls ; but when they saw that the guard stationed there, observed their uncertain movements with suspicion, Hubert again spurred forward, down to the Blackfriars bridge, as if he had been perfectly acquainted with the town.

"By the saints this will never do," he said at last, "the horse must have food and rest, even if we can do without them, and we may surely venture into some hostelry, for we are neither thieves nor assassins."

The shepherd readily agreed to this proposition, and with slackened pace they proceeded in search of a place of entertainment.

## CHAPTER VIII

HUBERT had dismounted, and was leading his horse by the bridle, through one of the narrow streets near the Church of All Saints, when, on passing the low, arched door way of a convent, he was suddenly struck by the sound of a voice familiar to his ear. He paused in astonishment, to listen to the remarkable tones.

The door was partly open, as if some one tarried, ere they came forth, to ad-

dress a few parting words to those they left within; and though these were uttered cautiously, they were yet loud enough to convince Hubert, that he was not mistaken in his suspicions, however wild they appeared to be. He distinctly saw by the gleaming of a lamp within, the portly person of a friar in the narrow passage, and there was sufficient day-light, for him at once to recognize the person of Marion, when she emerged from the portal.

She started back with evident astonishment, when she met the gaze of Hubert, but she gave no further token of surprise, and told him in a low whisper to hurry on with her. From time to time, as they proceeded, he observed that she glanced with wonder and curiosity at the female on his horse, and then more than once fixed her large, dark eyes on him, with an expression of perplexity and disappointment.

At length, when they reached an open space near the old castle gate, and when not another human being was visible save them-

selves, she murmured in hurried accents, "you have travelled slowly, Master Hubert. I left the hills three hours later than you, and have been here since noon."

"I lost my way, and my horse has had a double burthen to-day," was his reply, as he glanced towards the shepherd.

"Ay! I see what I marvel at!" returned Marion. "But whither were you going?"

"We feared to enter a public inn," was the young man's answer, "yet necessity had almost compelled us to do so, when you crossed our path."

"Follow me then," answered the page, and she suddenly turned towards a low entry, leading into a small court, where the upper stories of the wooden houses over-hung the the airless space between them, like a gloomy canopy. The wet stood on the uneven ground in pools, mixed with the most unwholesome combinations of refuse, of every description, for drains and pavements there were none. The noxious odours by no means gave a favourable idea of the lodging they

were to expect, and the decayed and miserable door before which Marion stopped, was not of better omen. But it was no time, for either Hubert, or his companion, to make objections, or inquiries ; yet when the former thought of the beauty and delicacy of his extraordinary guide, he was more astonished to meet her alone amidst such scenes, than he had formerly been to see her in the miller's hovel. It was evident, that some mysterious and extraordinary bond existed between her and Conyers, and that in his service, she forgot the timidity and the weakness of her sex, to fulfil his wishes, and carry on his secret intrigues, whatever they might be.

Yet, though he saw her thus familiarly passing amidst the dwellings of the lowest and most wretched, not a thought to her dishonor, ever crossed his mind. To him, her soul spoke from her eyes, and all therein was pure, elevated and holy. Like a spotless angel, she seemed to glide amongst mortal sinners, to save and console, without her

etherial nature contracting the slightest stain from such communion. He knew nothing of her history, save what he had divined from her countenance, and the tones of her soul born voice; yet he was convinced by these, that she had suffered fearfully and long; and that hope had fled before her, till now she only saw the phantom, sitting with closed wings awaiting her beyond the grave.

When with a key she drew from her vest, she unclosed the door of the gloomy dwelling to which she had conducted them, and desired Hubert and his companion to enter, and lead the horse into the wretched, unpaved, passage beyond, he obeyed her with the utmost confidence and alacrity. But the shepherd evidently hesitated, till taking him by the hand, he assured him on his honor, he had no cause for apprehensions.

"The boy is an old acquaintance of mine," he said, "and we have reason to be grateful that chance sent him to our aid."

"In truth you have," said Marion, who heard the words, whilst she was occupied in

securing the door within, "for the whole town is full of the king's soldiers. He has sent down commissioners to enlist, and it is certain, that if you had entered any inn, both you and your companion, whose kirtle cannot hide his voice, would have been forced to march to meet the royal army. Moreover," she added in a whisper, meant for Hubert's ear alone, "Master Richard Carlton lodges at Lord Westmoreland's to-night, and he has spies in every quarter, who would at once have recognized you, had they met you in their rambles. But this is no place for discourse," she added, when she observed he was about to answer her, "when we have put the horse in this stable on the right hand, I will show you to a chamber, where better cheer awaits us, than in this gloomy passage."

When Marion opened a door at the bottom of an old, winding staircase, the weary travellers were delighted to behold a large hall, or kitchen, where a huge fire was blazing in the chimney, and diffusing a bright

and cheerful light over the apartment. The architecture of the place, and all the furniture it contained, were rude and simple. Huge beams crossed the boarded roof, black with smoke and hung with a grotesque mixture of warlike weapons and domestic provision. In one place a dried leg of beef, was flanked by a battle axe; in another, the remains of a smoked cod-fish, were defended by a rusty buckler; and black puddings and buff jerkins, dried herbs and steel caps, formed a most extraordinary medley. On a shelf above the chimney, was a brilliant row of pewter plates, whilst a huge, oaken cupboard and a table of the same material, gave evident proof, by their polish, of a good house-wife's care. Five stout, soldier-like men, each with a battle axe at his side, were sitting drinking near the fire, whilst on a log of wood in the chimney corner, was a little, old woman, in a black kirtle and hood, spinning most industriously.

The men sprang up on the entrance of the

strangers, but a slight sign from Marion, sufficed to convince them that all was safe, and resuming their seats, they re-commenced their drinking and their discourse, as if no one were present save themselves. Not so the little, old woman, who appeared utterly unconscious that any change had taken place, till Marion glided towards her,, and putting her mouth close to her ear, pronounced her name in a clear and distinct tone. " Margery," she said, " I have brought strangers, who have need of a supper, and two beds for to-night. Moreover, they have left a horse in the stable, which Jemmy must see to, without delay."

The hostess looked up in the face of the fair speaker, and nodded a silent assent. Having sent the boy to provide for the horse, she then, with wonderful agility, commenced her culinary operations.

Whilst these were going forward, Marion, hastily lighting a small lamp, told Hubert to follow her. Most anxious to receive an explanation of the scene before him, and

her unexpected presence in Newcastle, he eagerly obeyed, and they ascended together, a wooden ladder, in a recess behind the chimney. From the landing-place to which this conducted, opened several doors, and Marion entering one of them with her companion, hastily closed it, and placed her light upon a small table in the centre of the chamber.

For a moment afterwards, she covered her face with her hands, to conceal the feelings it might have betrayed, or to collect her scattered thoughts, by a brief commune with herself. But the pause was short ere she again withdrew them, and hastily turning to Hubert, said in accents that seemed to struggle with tears, "you must think me a strange, shameless, audacious being, Master Saville—but I am not so—indeed I am not. There are sometimes fearful conflicts here," and she pressed her clasped hands on her heart, as if to still its beating, "ere I can perform the offices my duty commands. If you knew all you would pity me; but as it

is, I will trust to your generosity, to think no worse of me, nor to encourage the evil thoughts, to which, in another, it might give birth."

"Believe me," said the young man, with an expression of sincerity, which was not to be mistaken for compliment, "that although I feel wonder and curiosity, to see one so fair and delicate in male attire, and exposed to difficulties and trials, from which many men would shrink, no injurious suspicions as to your conduct has ever occurred to me. It is plainly to be seen, that a spirit of self-devotion, pure as the thoughts of angels, animates your heart. The earth and all its sins, are but as shadows unto thee!"

"And yet most sad realities!" she replied, with a deep sigh. "Ah! that such things were not, and that my soul were spared the torture of knowing how deeply, and darkly other souls can err. But enough—enough," she added, suddenly changing her tone, to that of ordinary conversation, "I came not hither to speak of myself—but I thank

thee—I thank thee with my whole heart, and I trust to be able to repay thee, ere the morrow, though now, I must impart most painful tidings. Master Hubert, be not alarmed when I tell you, your beloved, Ellen Collingwood, sleeps within the walls of this old town to-night."

"What do I hear?" exclaimed her astonished listener, "where, Marion? I pray you tell me where?"

"In the house of Lord Westmoreland."

"What! beneath the same roof with Carlton?—you distract me."

"Yes," returned the page, "she is a prisoner."

"Oh, Holy Mary, what new misfortunes are prepared for her!" was Hubert's distracted exclamation.

"Lady Isabel and her granddaughter had scarcely left the mill, escorted by Conyers, and some half dozen troopers and domestics. on their way to Redesdale, when Master Carlton, with a party more than double their number, fell upon them, and after a sharp

conflict, succeeded in making both the ladies his prisoners, Lady Isabel he sent back with a strong guard to the tower, whilst he conducted Mistress Ellen, as a Ward of the Crown, to London.

"Doubtless with the intention of securing her inheritance, by compelling her to wed her father's murderer!" cried Saville in a voice of horror and despair. "He is capable of that, and every other crime, and yet what right, or power have I to interfere to rescue her! The laws of God and man forbid our love!"

Impossible!" rejoined Marion. "When she arrives at the age of twenty one, she will again be free. Carlton must perish if King Richard falls; and then, although you be not rich, yet she hath wealth enough for both, and her pure and noble heart is thine for ever. Ah, Master Hubert, love is strong, and when it is mutual, makes all distinctions even."

"I ventured once to think so, Marion," answered her companion; "but is it possi-

ble you have not heard our fearful history? Is it possible, that you have not heard from Conyers, or Lady Isabel, that Ellen is my sister?"

"Impossible!" cried Marion with a slight movement of surprise.

"Her father, when he heard of our love, himself avowed it, though till then, he had ever sought to disown his base-born son, whom he confided to the care of Father Ambrose," returned Hubert, in accents of the deepest mortification.

"It was but a scheme of Carlton's to divide you!" said Marion quickly.

"Yet why should it divide us," cried the youth, forgetting, with the inconsequence of passion, his former words. As a brother it is my duty to rescue her from her father's assassin—to save her from eternal ruin—eternal misery—and though Carlton were ten times more powerful, I would defy him to the last moment of my existence. This night will I set her free—we will hasten to London! Marion—thou wert witness of his

crime—we will appeal to justice, and bring him to the scaffold. Yes! yes! Ellen at least shall be saved, though I can never call her mine"

"Master Hubert," returned his companion, looking with deep compassion on his excited countenance, "you are right, you must prove the unselfishness of your love, and be her friend—her brother—and then, should the tale you have told me be false, a noble satisfaction will be yours to claim her as your bride."

"Peace Marion, peace, and aid me rather to crush, than to cherish such vain hopes. I have need of all the strength, religion and my early habits of endurance have given me, to support the conflict in my breast."

"Sir Hugh Collingwood placed you secretly with the priest of Bellingham, said you not, Master Hubert?" demanded Marion.

"So the good Father Ambrose, himself, informed me."

"Then the meaning of this paper is at once clear," she returned, holding forth to-

wards Hubert a much soiled letter, which she had hastily drawn from her bosom, with a beaming brightness in her dark eyes, which fully expressed the delight of a generous heart, at contributing to another's joy. "When Lady Isabel and her escort had ridden forth," she added, "I remained alone at the mill, to proceed to Newcastle with letters, which Conyers had that morning received from the coast, from a foreign emissary of the Countess of Richmond, from a certain priest, Sir Christopher Urswick, and which I have already confided to the care of the Abbot of the monastery whence you saw me come forth. Knowing that Andrew the miller had been acquainted with many of the secret affairs of Master Conyers, I thought it best, as a measure of precaution, ere I departed, to search the dead man's dwelling, lest any dangerous papers might be hidden there. Amongst the straw of his bed, I found that, and two other letters, all from abroad, containing messages to Conyers about troops and money for the young Henry

Earl of Richmond, and other private affairs between themselves, of which I then understood nothing. Your narrative has somewhat explained the mystery; but we will read them, Master Hubert. See, here the passage begins. 'It is now more than two years since I had any tidings from you, of the boy at the Vicarage. When Conyers next writes, send a message by him, in such phrases as he cannot understand, for I would not that even he were acquainted with the boy's real parentage. If the secret escaped whilst the Yorkists are in power, his life would be in danger; for a certain Secretary, would not scruple to insure his inheritance at any price. Say only, *in life and prosperity*, or *persecution* or *death*, as it may be, and I shall fully understand you.' And here again," she continued turning to the second letter, "'It delights me to hear, Father Ambrose gives the boy an education worthy of his ancestors. When Richmond has his own, the youth may yet compel his uncle, Sir Hugh, to do him justice.' His

uncle Sir Hugh! mark you that!" cried Marion joyfully pointing to the words.

"Ah, would it were so!" exclaimed Hubert eagerly, "and yet, just heaven, this accords with Lady Isabel's doubts, and explains her suspicions."

"Hear further," added the girl, unfolding the third paper. "'Keep strict watch that they force him not into a monastery, and at every risk and cost, send me tidings in case the danger thereof is pressing. If he love the girl, by the saints he shall marry her, and have his own lands, as soon as our king is on the throne. Let me know all, in good time and have no fear! I shall prove an overmatch for the Secretary. But above all, remember your oath of secrecy.'"

"Just heaven, I thank thee!" exclaimed Hubert, flinging himself suddenly on his knees, before a little cross that stood in a corner of the room, and for a few moments, remaining in silent prayer; then arising, he took the hand of Marion in his. "Next to heaven, I owe my gratitude to thee," he

said, "now have I hope once more. I cannot doubt that I am he to whom allusion is made in those letters, and that the darkest injustice has been done me, from my infancy, by him who ought to have been the protector of his brother's orphan. But Sir Hugh has fearfully paid the penalty of his crimes, and now that he no longer lives, nothing shall prevent my using every effort to prove my right, as the son of Sir Reginald Collingwood to the lands of my ancestors. But tell me, Marion, have you, who know so much of the affairs and secrets of Master Conyers, any idea, from the writing, who is the author of these most important letters ?"

"It resembles in some points, that of the priest, Sir Christopher Urswick, the confessor of the Countess of Richmond, of whom I have already spoken."

"And is he still abroad ?"

"To the best of my knowledge ! he has long been employed in Flanders, Brittany and France, carrying on negotiations with various sovereigns and noblemen, for the Earl of Richmond's elevation to the throne

of England. Lord Stanley, though he pretends to be ignorant of his wife's intrigues, and has even been commissioned by king Richard to hold her in solitary confinement, is the principal mover of the conspiracy in England. Yet this nobleman himself, has never openly corresponded with Conyers, who is one of his most active agents; all orders and money have been conveyed to him from Sir Christopher Urswick, whose letters are ever written in different, feigned hands; and though I have seen dozens of them, I could not swear that these in my possession exactly resemble any."

"Then I cannot hope to procure anything, till I have had an interview with this same priest, either at home, or abroad," said Hubert. "It seems clear that he holds the thread of my destiny in his hands. Nevertheless, I am deeply grateful for the information these letters contain. Whatever I may still be in the eyes of others, I have the bliss to feel, I am not Ellen's brother, and that conviction is, alone, enough to nerve

my arm with ten-fold strength and to fill my heart with energy. Come what may, consciousness of honor is restored, and I have hopes on earth that make me careless of all present suffering. But we lose time in words, Marion, whilst Ellen is yet a prisoner. She too must be made a partaker of my joy, she too must know that we may dare to love."

"She is doubtlessly strictly guarded by Carlton's people, for my Lord Westmoreland is absent," said the page. "I learnt from the friar to whom I delivered my letters, that she was too ill to continue her journey, and that he had been sent for, to prescribe for her. Turn not so pale, Master Hubert, her malady was nothing dangerous."

"The trials and fatigues she hath undergone, have at length overpowered her!" cried the young man.

"The priest assured me, she had only need of rest and gentle treatment, and that tomorrow she might, with safety, pursue her journey."

"Is it not possible, that this same friar may procure me an interview?" demanded Hubert.

"This thought has likewise occurred to me," returned his companion. "But who is that man in female garments below? If we find means to restore Mistress Ellen to liberty, your flight must be impeded by no such companions."

"He is disguised to escape the king's officers, and join the Earl of Richmond, whom we heard had already landed in Wales."

"Then let him proceed alone," she returned.

"He is lame from an accident, and cannot walk," answered Hubert.

"Lend him your horse, that he may ride with the men you saw round the fire, who are all bound on the same journey. We are all rebels here, and there are thousands throughout the land, though King Richard has been unable, hitherto, to discover the extent, or instigators of the conspiracy, which

will, ere long, dash him from the throne. We may now dare to hope, that his evil days will be brought to a close ere he has forced the promised bride of Richmond, Elizabeth, the daughter of Edward the Fifth, to become his wife."

"What! would the monster marry his own niece? the sister of the young Princes whom he murdered in the Tower!"

"So it is said, and he has even found means to persuade her mother, the Queen Dowager, to deliver her and her sisters to his custody, in defiance of her engagements with Richmond."

"Most weak, false woman!" exclaimed the youth. "Can nothing teach her honesty, or wisdom."

"Some men pity her, for she was in the tyrant's power," said Marion, "and even Lord Stanley has been compelled to deliver him his son as a hostage for his fidelity."

"Can we speak with the friar to-night?" demanded Hubert, abruptly interrupting her; for, whilst she spoke of politics, his thoughts

had been occupied alone, by the image of Ellen.

"I have to return to him, in a couple of hours, for the letters he prepares for Conyers," she said, "and you can then accompany me, if such be your pleasure."

"Wherefore this delay?" cried the young man, eagerly.

"I dare not intrude on the privacy of the holy man, till the appointed hour," was Marion's reply, "but in the meantime, let us go below, you have need of refreshment."

"And I must likewise inform my companion that we can no longer travel together," rejoined Hubert. "But you must allow me to keep these papers, Marion; they are of more importance to me, than to any one else."

"Assuredly," she returned, as she delivered them to him, "and that they may prove the means of restoring you to the lands and honors of your ancestors, is my most earnest wish."

"One word more, Marion, ere we go," said Hubert earnestly, laying his hand on her arm, "when you return to the hills, I beseech you, if it be possible, to see Lady Isabel, to repeat to her the contents of these letters, and assure her, that you have seen me thus far, safely on my journey."

"I will do all in my power," she replied, and then hastily descending the ladder, Hubert followed her, full of anxious yet more happy thoughts, than he had known since Father Ambrose had imparted to him the secret of his birth.

The shepherd heard his decision to travel alone, with regret; but warmly expressed his thanks for the services Hubert had already rendered him, and it was speedily arranged that he should, on the morrow, accompany the soldiers to the borders of Wales.

Hubert's supper was scarcely concluded, when Marion made him a sign to depart; and wishing a friendly farewell to the shepherd, they left the house.

There was no moon, and low clouds rendered it more than usually dark, when the young soldier and his companion emerged from the narrow passage, on to the place before the Castle gate, but voices were still to be heard from the busier parts of the town, and lights were moving about in all directions, as if the whole population was making preparations to resist a siege.

Hubert carried the staff, given him by Conyers at parting, in his hand, but as he passed by the door of a hostelry, where a crowd of fighting men was assembled, some swearing, some singing, and all more or less intoxicated, he felt under his mantle, if his sword and battle axe were safe.

Marion clung to his arm with evident timidity, as they passed through the rude throng, but she uttered not a word until they entered the street of the monastery, and then only to desire him to follow her into a narrow passage, under an open, gothic archway, he had not before observed. After proceeding a few minutes along this

dark avenue, his guide pushed open a heavy door at the end of it, and he was astonished to find himself in a beautiful chapel, the ancient and rich architecture of which, was only dimly visible in the mysterious light of the tapers that burnt before the different shrines, and of three small silver lamps, hanging by invisible chains from the roof.

Two monks knelt before the high altar in earnest prayer, and the quick eye of Marion failed not to distinguish another, in a confessional chair, in the gloomiest corner of the building.

Thither, after making a slight sign to Hubert, she quickly glided, and kneeling down, placed her face against the opening through which the holy father was wont to listen to the confessions of penitents. Her story, told in whispered accents, was quickly understood—the letters for Conyers adroitly conveyed to her, and when she arose, she softly desired Hubert to follow her example, while she offered up a prayer before a neighbouring altar.

The first question put to the new penitent, by the priest, was, if he were willing to incur the danger of liberating Mistress Ellen Collingwood from the power of the King's secretary, to which he replied with the utmost alacrity, that he would die to release her from Carlton's power.

"You have known her long?" inquired the monk drily.

"From our childhood," was the young man's answer.

"And thou art sure she will willingly place herself under thy protection to proceed to the dwelling of the Countess of Richmond? for it is there such a rich heiress must be placed.

"I have no doubt of it," said Hubert.

"Then I will see her without delay," answered the holy man, "and arrange with her the manner of her flight. Return hither an hour hence, and thou shalt know how thy aid will be required. No answer, but begone."

Then making the usual signs of benediction,

the priest turned away, and Hubert arose, and accompanied by Marion, left the church. He felt disappointed, he scarcely knew wherefore, by what had passed, and his patience was severely tried by the necessity for passing another hour in uncertainty, when every minute that Ellen remained in Carlton's power appeared fraught with danger

## CHAPTER IX.

An hour before midnight, Hubert was gliding along under the high wall that surrounded Lord Westmoreland's garden, accompanied by the same priest with whom he had spoken in the chapel, and to whom, as he conversed, he from time to time gave the name of Father Francis. He now found him kind and open hearted, ready to assist him by his counsels, and to aid the object he had in view, by every means in his

power. In fact, the Abbot of his monastery, Morton, a brother of the famous Bishop of Ely, (who had been the first agitator of the Duke of Buckingham's rebellion, and the Earl of Richmond's pretensions to the throne) was most anxious to rescue a beautiful and rich ward from the power of Carlton ; aware that should Richard the Third be shortly dethroned, his successor would be well content that such a prize had been rescued for him, to bestow as a reward on some of his faithful followers.

Hubert knew nothing of these interested views, and his employer regarded him as a mere soldier of fortune, who was anxious to push his fortunes and recommend himself to the Lancastrian party. Neither he nor the priest had any knowledge of each other's thoughts, as they passed under the old stone wall.

At length they reached a door behind the house. It stood partly open.

" We enter here," said the priest, and

Hubert strode after him, along a narrow walk between two lines of old yew trees.

"You must hide yourself there," he added, pointing to a clump of low bushes near the house, "and I will proceed up stairs to visit my patient. The entrance to her chamber is from the first landing place, and there, as I have told you, stands a well armed guard. Openly to attack him, would be to bring upon us the two hundred ruffians, Master Carlton's guard, who lodge to night in the offices. We must go more cautiously to work. Listen attentively till you hear my voice speaking with this fellow. I will stop to admire his battle axe, and as he must carry it to the lamp hung against the wall, I will contrive that his back is turned to the stairs, for two minutes at least, after I have coughed aloud. You know the rest, and will not fail to fulfil your promises."

"Doubt me not," was the young man's laconic reply, and the priest entered the building.

Hubert awaited with impatience, the

moment for action. For nearly ten minutes all remained still around him, except, when the soldiers, comprising Carlton's guard, sang a drunken glee in savage chorus, or the murmur of their discourse mingled with the rustle of the breeze amongst the branches. At length, he was sure he heard the voice of Father Francis. He crept cautiously from his concealment—he ventured to cross the threshold of the door, and when in the passage within, he saw the gleams of the lamp above, and heard the steps of the guard as he paced to and fro on the landing place. The priest had again returned into the chamber of Ellen.

This pause was one of intense anxiety. Hubert was fearful that he had failed to hear the signal of Father Francis, and all the sufferings of Ellen in case of his failure to effect her escape, and all the danger to which she must be exposed, ere the desperate enterprize in which he was engaged, could be completed, thronged equally on his mind, as the minutes flew past without any

change taking place above. At length a door opened.

Yes it was Ellen's soft voice he heard, speaking from her chamber, and then the monk blessed her, and all was again still. But only for a moment. The conversation between the priest and the guard, commenced without delay, and the loud laughter of the latter, proved that the monk knew how to address him, so as to excite his good humour. With outstretched neck, Hubert stood eagerly listening with his battle axe in his hand. At length the monk coughed! he coughed twice—thrice— it was the signal, which he no sooner heard, than springing up three steps, of the short staircase, at a time, he had darted within the door of Ellen's chamber, ere the soldier was aware that any one had passed him, and when, to his utter astonishment, he beheld the martial figure of the young man, it was already too late to intercept him. He snatched his battle axe, with a tremendous oath, from the hands of the priest, and rushed to the

door, but ere he reached it, it was closed and strongly secured within.

"Fly, fly, Ellen!" not a moment is to be lost," cried Hubert, when this was done. "Which is the window?"

"Here to the right," eagerly returned the lady. "It is already open, but oh Hubert, it is a fearful path we have to tread."

"Fear not! my foot is steady," he replied, "above all, when thy safety is confided to my keeping."

But even the heart of Hubert trembled, not for himself but Ellen, when he looked out, and by the light from her chamber, beheld their destined way. Yet no time for hesitation remained. The guard was thundering at the chamber door with his battle axe, and calling on his companions below to come to his aid.

Hubert sprang from the window on to a narrow parapet, about three feet beneath. It was the summit of a high stone wall dividthe garden from an inner court, and after extending about sixty feet in length, termi-

nated at the corner of a deserted alley, nearly in front of the church of St. Nicholas. It was scarcely two feet wide, and the passage was rendered yet more dangerous by the presence of a number Carlton's men in the court it skirted. Yet even Father Francis, who knew the house and all its avenues well, had been unable to devise any other way for the escape of Ellen, and undismayed by a danger which she knew afforded her only chance of liberty, she had joyfully agreed to his proposed plan. With Hubert she had no fear, and with dauntless heart, she followed him through the window.

He took her like a child in his arms, and whispering to her not to utter a word, he commenced his dangerous passage.

The guard, joined by many of his comrades, thundered louder than ever at the door, which both the fugitives well knew, could only for a few minutes retard their progress, whilst they still saw beneath them, more than a dozen troopers remaining round

a blazing fire, swearing, and deriding the clamour of their companions. Hubert, conscious of the precious burthen he carried, dared not turn to take a look at what was passing beneath, but pressing Ellen close to his heart, he hurried on with rapid and firm steps, every instant more and more apprehensive, lest they should be observed by the soldiers in the court, or that some of the men whose voices were distinctly audible in the chamber they had left, should dare to pursue them.

Not more than ten feet remained to be trodden, ere they reached the end of the wall, when a portion of the old stone work, where the cement had crumbled by time, suddenly gave way beneath the weight of the fugitives, and fell down with a crashing noise into the court. Hubert for a moment nearly lost his balance, and Ellen clung still closer to him as if to save them both from falling! they were scarcely beyond the danger, and had advanced only a few paces further, when a loud shout from

beneath proclaimed that they were discovered. In another instant two arrows whizzed closely past them—and then another—and another. But all equally missed their aim, and Hubert, with his beloved burthen uninjured, quickly stood at the end of the wall. He gave a low, shrill whistle, and was instantly answered by the well known signal of Marion.

"Heaven reward her, she is ever faithful," he rapidly whispered, as soon as he had ascertained that a ladder was already placed against the wall. "Quick—quick—dearest Ellen—here you must go alone."

"And leave you exposed to the arrows which are flying like hail?" she returned.

"I will instantly follow," he said, "but delay not, I pray you. Hold my hand and descend instantly. See, there are three men on the wall already."

Ellen did not look round; she obeyed him with a speed, of which in a moment of tranquillity, she would have been incapable,

yet though Saville instantly followed her, they had barely time to reach the ground, and dash down the ladder, ere the foremost of their pursuers occupied the parapet above. The loud clamour of the men announced their disappointment, for the height of the wall rendered the leap impossible, except for a desperate man, and they were soon unwillingly compelled to retrace their steps.

"We must hence with all speed," was Marion's hasty salutation. "The whole of the party lodged in the house will quickly come round by the street, and you are both lost, if they intercept us ere we reach the chapel."

With anxious hearts they ran, as rapidly as Ellen's weakness permitted, across the open space before the church, towards the narrow streets near the monastery, hoping, that, in that labyrinth, at least, there was a chance of safety. But their flight was not unseen. The moon was now up, and, unfortunately, for the first time that night, shone through the stormy clouds, making

their figures distinctly visible to a soldier who still remained as a scout on the wall, and who, as soon as his companions came round to the street, directed them, with loud shouts, to the path of the fugitives.

Fiendish yells rang amongst the dark old buildings, as the troopers ran out from all the different taverns, at the sound of the tumult, and the rushing of many feet, and fearful and menacing cries, ever louder and louder, seemed to gain rapidly on Hubert and his companions: when they reached the entrance of the narrow street in which he had first met with Marion, Ellen, overcome by terror, could no longer continue the same rapid pace, at which they had commenced their flight, yet Hubert, well knowing that on the loss of a minute their fate might probably depend, feared to allow her a pause to take breath.

"One instant! only one," she murmured, in scarcely audible accents, as she clung heavily to his arm, but it was almost certain death to comply; and, without any answer,

he again snatched her up in his arms, and calling on Marion to follow, ran with all speed up the street. Several arrows flew past them, as, from time to time, they were visible to their pursuers in the moonlight, but though Hubert was once slightly wounded in the shoulder, he paused not, neither did he turn, till he reached the entrance of the narrow passage, he had before trodden, to the chapel. When within the archway, he hastily placed Ellen on the ground, and praying her and Marion to hurry onward, he turned to intercept the progress of a soldier, who was already close behind him.

The whole scene he then beheld, was wild and awful. More than fifty torches, carried by the guard of Carlton, glared over the old, wooden houses, and the savage crowd of half drunken soldiers, who, with wild shouts, came rushing from every neighbouring opening, many ignorant of the cause of alarm, but all ready for tumult and bloodshed.

Newcastle was the rendezvous of the new

levies for the king, and numbers of outlaws and men of depraved character, who had been lurking since the last rebellion on the borders, had eagerly seized the occasion to exercise, with the royal authority, the trade of plunder and rapine. The body-guard of the secretary, hastily collected since his residence at the Tower, were of equally bad reputation, and, provided they were paid and employed, cared little for which side they took up arms. Such were those whose wild clamour now fearfully recalled to the memory of the peaceful inhabitants of Newcastle, the past horrors of the civil wars, and induced many to take up arms to defend themselves from violence and plunder. One vainly asked another, if Richmond had landed? if the Scots had made an incursion across the border? or, if a new rebellion had broken out? None but Carlton's men knew the real object of pursuit, and they, in a compact body, were all pushing around the door, where Hubert took his stand, to protect the flight of Ellen and Marion to the chapel.

The foremost of these was Tom Reed, the fellow who had carried him prisoner from the Manor House, and who now, instantly recognizing him in the light of the torches, determined to take him either dead or alive, to repair, by such a service, the disgrace of having formerly allowed him to escape.

"Down with the traitor," he furiously exclaimed, making a circle in the air with his waving battle axe, as if he would at one stroke, have cleft in twain the skull of his enemy. But Hubert sprang nimbly aside, so that the fellow, overbalanced by his own violent effort, stumbled forward nearly to the ground, and ere he could recover his equilibrium, the youth's axe fell, with a deadly blow, on the back of his neck and extended him lifeless on the ground.

The enraged crowd, at this spectacle, pressed forward with yet fiercer cries than before.

"Death to the Lancastrian," was repeated from many mouths, and one man, who had

previously been employed to keep watch on the movements of Marion, when she visited the monastery, having caught a glimpse of her boyish figure in the vaulted passage, loudly summoned his companions to seize the spy, for whose arrest a reward had that evening been offered.

Marion, who was well aware that her steps had been watched since her arrival in Newcastle, knew well that against her alone these latter cries were directed, but she heeded them not ; life was to her of little value, and her only anxiety was to place her companions beyond the reach of danger —to rescue the innocent from the vicious and ruthless mob. But Ellen was deaf to her entreaties to leave Hubert to meet his fate alone, although his anxiety was redoubled by the knowledge that she shared his danger.

" Back—back ! for the love of heaven fly to the chapel ; tarry not for me," he cried, as he stood foot to foot with a stout borderer, and kept him manfully at bay. Still as he fought,

he retreated with his face towards the enemy, and as the passage narrowed towards the chapel, every step he gained was an advantage.

"Down with the traitor!" "Cleave his skull with thy axe!" "Take him dead or alive!" were the cries that filled the vaulted avenue, but though all commanded, it seemed as if none had the power to obey. The foremost were killed, after vainly exerting all their strength to master their solitary opponent. Hubert, in spite of his wounds at the Manor House, was once more in full vigour, and as he raised his heavy weapon on high, and his broad breast and nostrils dilated with energy, the sturdiest Northman there, quailed before a figure so noble and so athletic. Those in the rear pushed ever impatiently forward, whilst those in front, unable to make way against Hubert, over the bodies of the fallen, and encumbered by the pressure of their companions, uttered dreadful maledictions, alike against friends and foes.

The flames and smoke of the torches

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"Down with the traitor!" "Cleave his skull with thy axe!" "Take him dead or alive!" were the cries that filled the vaulted avenue, but though all commanded, it seemed as if none had the power to obey. The foremost were killed, after vainly exerting all their strength to master their solitary opponent. Hubert, in spite of his wounds at the Manor House, was once more in full vigour, and as he raised his heavy weapon on high, and his broad breast and nostrils dilated with energy, the sturdiest Northman there, quailed before a figure so noble and so athletic. Those in the rear pushed ever impatiently forward, whilst those in front, unable to make way against Hubert, over the bodies of the fallen, and encumbered by the pressure of their companions, uttered dreadful maledictions, alike against friends and foes.

The flames and smoke of the torches

seemed to fill the vaulted avenue ; the flickering light now displaying some rude and fearful countenance convulsed by passion, now flashing on steel caps, or on an uplifted axe, now flaring over some other portion of the struggling crowd, and displaying, in bright relief against the darkness of the distance, the full armed soldiers, who were most vociferous for the arrest of the prisoners, and who, as they cried for vengeance on the House of Lancaster, and pushed and struggled with each other, seemed more like enraged savages than the inhabitants of a land called civilized.

The handsome and youthful person of Hubert, in his simple dress of Lincoln green, offered a striking contrast to the demoniac figures who pursued him. His mantle was cast back, so as to leave his right arm free, his velvet cap alone upon his clustering hair, his lips compressed with haughty resolve and indignation, his eyes flashing like an outraged lion, and his whole form absolutely exalted by the influence of his excited mind.

Ellen, beautiful in her agony and her terror, bent eagerly forward, as if on the point of casting herself between him and his enemies; whilst Marion held her right arm with both her hands, and uttering the most imploring and heart-touching words, vainly endeavoured to drag her from the scene of conflict. Above all stood the statue of St. John, calm and motionless as the heaven where he abides, looking down on this terrible exhibition of the same evil passions, which it had been the object of his holy life to eradicate from the human breast, still in a Christian land as rife and furious as under the dominion of Jewish obduracy.

Back and back retreated Hubert towards the chapel, still keeping his pursuers at bay. Three had already fallen beneath his battle-axe, and the voice of Marion warned him, that he was within a leap of the open door, to which he feared to glance even for an instant, when the recess of a window, by widening the passage where he fought, gave a sudden and unexpected advantage to his

adversaries. But even these wild soldiers were daunted by the prowess he had shewn, and he who was engaged with him, hand to hand, vainly called in a loud voice to his companions to cast down their weapons and seize the traitor round the body, whilst his arms were raised with his battle-axe. He had scarcely uttered these words, when a tremendous blow on his own steel cap laid him prostrate, and ere his comrades could pass over the fallen bodies, Hubert sprang, like an eagle, within the open door of the chapel.

The exultation and joy of Ellen and Marion, who received him with wild exclamations of delight, were quickly ended when they heard the savage crowd without, rendered yet more outrageous by the fate of their companions, pressing with horrid yells against the door, which the former, with her usual presence of mind, had quickly closed and secured within.

"To the block with all traitors," "Down with the Lancastrians," were the universal

cries of the ruffians as they strove with united strength to force an entrance. As one wearied, another took his place, and their battle-axes fell with quick and repeated strokes against the trembling wood-work, till at length the hinges suddenly gave way and a tremendous yell announced the victory of the rabble. But ere they could pass the threshold of the sacred dwelling, they beheld a spectacle that at once arrested their fury; and instead of rushing forward to seize their victims, who knelt at the altar, they stood fixed as statues, gazing with reverential and superstitious awe.

The chapel was a blaze of light, and all the brethren of the monastery each carrying a burning taper in his hand, in long procession filled the sacred aisles, where lamps were burning before every shrine. The abbot, a splendid looking man of more than six feet high, walked at their head, till suddenly stopping, when they had approached within twenty paces of the astonished soldiers, he raised a golden crucifix on high

with one hand, and pointing towards Hubert and the women with the other, pronounced, in a loud and authoritative tone, the word—"*Sanctuary!* Let he who dares, commit the sin of sacrilege."

Even in those lawless times of bloody strife, the rights and immunities of the Church were ever held sacred by the most abandoned, and the highest personages of the realm in the vicissitudes of the fortunes of their party, had repeatedly found shelter in her protecting bosom, till happier times returned; nor was it till a later period, that traitors were deprived, by a special enactment, of the privilege thus claimed by Hubert and his companions.

The crowd had, in their fury, forgotten the character of the place they attacked; but no sooner were these awful words pronounced, than the feeble-minded, appalled by their near approach to a crime of which the superstitious had more horror than of murder, and the daring, restrained by habit and the dread of punishment, alike receded

before the majestic priest, and his loudly pronounced threats of excommunication.

"Send for Master Carlton to look after his own prisoners," at length cried a voice in the crowd. "He is a fitter man to parley with the clergy than any here;" and a universal murmur of approbation followed this proposition.

Each of the mob felt, that the fray had already been carried so far as to expose him to the danger of arrest, and each, when success was no longer possible, strove to be the first to regain the street. The clamor of this contention was scarcely less than that of the previous conflict, although less deadly in its character.

Carlton, who well knew the privileges of the sanctuary, and preferred, where ever it was possible to fight his battles by the hands of others, had forborne to take an active part in the pursuit of Ellen, trusting that his half intoxicated soldiers, forgetting all sacred things in their excitement, would seize the fugitives in spite of every obstacle. Nor

had he indeed believed it possible for Hubert to reach the chapel in spite of his pursuers, till his own name frequently repeated, and the broken exclamations of his flying and discomfitted soldiers, informed him of what had passed. This was no sooner understood, than with that courage which rarely forsook him, he ordered his attendants to make a way for him through the crowded streets, and preceded by three serving men with drawn swords and flaming torches, he entered the passage leading to the chapel.

Some time elapsed ere he could make his way to the open doors, and when he entered the holy pile, the abbot and his brethren had already withdrawn near the altar, forming a half circle in front of the fugitives, and chanting a hymn of thanksgiving in a full and lofty chorus, that drowned even the noise of the struggling mob without.

The secretary, inflated by all the imperious insolence of a royal favorite, found himself unexpectedly compelled to await for the conclusion of the anthem, ere he could assert his

power, and to attend in silence till it was the pleasure of the haughty abbot to listen to the demands he came thither so impatiently to urge. The royal authority, even when represented by more august personages than Master Carlton, had in that age frequently to succumb, at least in appearance, before the power of the Church.

The rage of the courtier was fierce and deep at this humiliation, by a set of intriguing hypocrites, as he considered the clergy, and when all was again silent in the chapel, and he advanced towards the abbot, it was with the utmost difficulty he could assume some appearance of calmness, whilst addressing a man, whose brother Morton, Bishop of Ely, was well known to have been long actively engaged in extensive intrigues for the elevation of the young Earl of Richmond to the throne of England.

"Would to heaven I had an army at my back," he thought, "I would soon teach this haughty priest, that even the benefit of clergy should not save him from the scaffold."

"Master Carlton, if you are the instigator or the exciter of the sacrilegious band, who have dared to profane this sacred edifice by their violence, prepare to answer for it!" said the abbot, with haughty coldness, ere the secretary had time to address him.

"Were I to be compelled to be responsible for every troop of ruffians, which the Church excites to outrage in this rebellious age, I should lack time to say a pater-noster," returned Carlton, with a sneer. "I have moreover other occupation, and came here to demand, in the king's name, the person of a notorious traitor, the murderer of that loyal knight, Sir Hugh Collingwood, and the abductor of a Ward of the Crown. I demand likewise, that the said Ward of the Crown, Mistress Ellen Collingwood, be restored to my guardianship, as her nearest relative, till I can place her under the care of those whom the king may please to appoint."

"Of the crimes and characters of those who have here this night sought sanctuary, we are equally ignorant; nor is it our

business to inquire their history," returned the abbot. "We can suffer no constraint to be put upon their actions, whilst within the sacred precincts of the altar, nor force to be used to remove them thence, but you are free to ask them, if they are here by their own desire, or are willing to accompany you hence."

Having thus spoke, the holy father gave a sign to his brethren to divide on either side of the altar, so as to leave the fugitives fully disclosed to view. On one side stood Hubert supporting the drooping form of Ellen, who had sunk down on the steps of the altar. On the other was Marion; her face pale as marble, and her dilated eyes flashing with that unearthly light, which the very name of Carlton, sufficed at all times to excite.

The glance of the secretary first fell upon the lovers, but ere he had found words to address Ellen, his gaze wandered with curiosity to the third person of the group. In spite of her male attire, and the change wrought by sufferings on her fair face since

to examine the truth of your accusations, and whether that person be a woman, or a boy, as he appears, concerns us little. Make your inquiries and demands, if you have any to make, of these persons themselves without further delay; for this scene has been already too long protracted."

Carlton bit his lips, and the fear of derision and contempt, alone restrained him from expressing his rage. The conflict in his breast was terrible, but he mastered it; and then in soft accents intreated Ellen, by their ties of consanguinity, and the bond of friendship long so closely knit between her parents and himself, to return to his honorable protection, instead of destroying her good name for ever by following the fortunes of a base-born traitor—the assassin of her own father, and the companion of rebels and cut-throats.

Ellen, who had hitherto remained, apparently, unconscious of all that was passing around her, at these words slowly arose, and the soft, sad tones of her voice, and the grace

of her tall and beautiful figure, now clothed in the deepest mourning, was inexpressibly touching, as she replied—

"Your accusation against Hubert Saville, Master Carlton, are as false as he who utters them; and even if he be base-born, as no man living can prove, he is my father's son, and my good name can never be endangered by my accepting the protection of a brother. That he is the assassin of Sir Hugh Collingwood, I deny, for when the death-cry of my murdered father rang through the woods, he was in my company, at a place, where, though we heard the fearful sound, we neither saw nor suspected the terrible deed that had been committed. Forcibly seized, with my grandmother, Lady Isabel, by you, Master Carlton, I have taken the first opportunity to escape from my captivity, and I now publicly declare, that I would sooner die than fall again into your power—you—false traitor, who, though you have the audacity to accuse others of your crimes, I firmly believe to be the real murderer of my father."

"A most cunningly contrived conspiracy, no doubt," exclaimed the secretary, no longer able to play the sycophant, "an admirable scheme to ruin my good name and sanction your own outrageous conduct. For your sake I trust you are deceived, and not a willing actress in this shameless mockery of all things pure and honest, but whether you are false, or deluded by the falsehoods of others, the crime of your paramour is too atrocious to be palliated by such idle assertions, and though party influence may here protect the traitor for a brief space, you shall learn, ere long, that the power of the king and the might of the law are yet sufficient in this kingdom to bring the murderer of a noble and loyal knight to the scaffold."

"Then let it be in thy person, most bold dissembler!" exclaimed Marion, in a voice which made the whole assembly start, as like an inspired creature, she stood forth in front of the altar, her head cast back, her usually pale cheeks glowing with the

fire of indignation, and her flashing eyes expressing unutterable scorn. "Once thou hast pursued the innocent, with thy diabolical arts even to the stake; once thou hast had the triumph of looking, with gloating eyes, on the tortures of thy dying victim, and that black crime will prove enough for the eternal condemnation of thy soul! But even on earth, heaven's justice does not sleep, and she, whom by every means you sought in vain to entice into the depths of infamy —she whom thy vengeance forced to behold her father die amidst the raging flames—she whose good name and youthful hopes thy lying lips have blasted — she whom thou hast robbed of all affection cherishes, of reputation, home and kindred, of all save her virtue, which heaven sustained, nor falsehood, nor oppression can destroy—yes, she—thy long chased victim—a poor, feeble woman, in defiance of all thy royal favor and thy haughty pretensions, hath, by divine justice, been made the instrument to punish thy long career of crime, and prove the inno-

cence of that noble youth, whom thou wouldst sacrifice to screen thy guilt. Yes, Master Carlton, Marion, whom thou hast so long sought to crush, like a reptile, beneath thy feet—I, who scorned thy love, as I do thy hate, I saw thee plant this dagger in the heart of Sir Hugh Collingwood!" and she suddenly drew a weapon stained with blood from her girdle. "I saw thee push him over the slippery rock, down to the stream beneath, and, ere thou hads't time to descend to rifle the body, I secured this bloody evidence. Thy arms and thy initials are on the hilt."

The whole figure of Carlton appeared drawn together by some internal agony when he beheld his own dagger in the hands of Marion. Cold drops stood on his pale brow, his lips were compressed, and with eyes flashing like an enraged tiger, he was about to spring forward and tear it from her grasp, when the whole body of monks interposed between them, and again shut her and her companions

from his view. So great was his rage and terror to find that such an evidence against him existed, of the murder of Sir Hugh, that could he have counted on the services of his men, he would instantly have led on an attack against the monks, sword in hand, and setting at nought all the rights of Sanctuary and the power of the Church, have borne Hubert and his companions dead or alive from the very steps of the altar. Once—twice, he cried aloud to charge; but no man obeyed his voice.

"Go, Master Carlton, go! retire whilst there is yet an opportunity," said the abbot, with a quiet smile of scorn. "You may often have been successful in bullying a common council, or a parliament—those to whom you have sold yourself as the tool of their crimes, may be duped by your flatteries to take your honesty on your own report, but God's holy altar is no fitting scene for the display either of your violence or your hypocrisy. Go, and learn for once, that there are souls on earth strengthened by

the Divine Spirit, and sustained by heavenly mercy, who dare stand forward as the defenders of the innocent, undaunted by all the might of tyranny, and the persecutions of injustice! Go, and learn what thou hast ever denied till now, that the spiritual and moral influence of pure religion is alone capable of successfully resisting the corrupt passions of degraded man. Hadst thy career been guided by her lessons, thou hadst not been the wretched thing thou art."

"Hypocrite!" exclaimed Carlton, with well affected scorn, "an army shall avenge this insult, and thou and thy traitor brother repent it, ere long, on the scaffold!"

The abbot only smiled with silent contempt, and ere the secretary, with rapid steps, had reached the door of the chapel, the monks again poured forth, in majestic chorus, their song of peace and thanksgiving.

Ellen, meanwhile, exhausted by all the fatigue and harrowing excitement she had undergone, and deeply pained by the spectacle

of human guilt and evil passions, the recent events had so fearfully and suddenly disclosed to her, hid her face in her hands and wept. To her, whose emotions were all virtue, such things had hitherto been as dreams, of which she heard without feeling their reality, and she now shrunk appalled from the visible existence of human degradation. Had Hubert not stood at her side —had he not already communicated to her his suspicions of his real birth, her first impulse would have been to shut herself up in a convent, and in commune with her God to lose sight, for ever, of the world of sin and evil passion, by which she was surrounded ; but when he took her hand in his, when with soft words he endeavored to soothe and sustain her drooping heart, then she felt with ecstasy that she was not alone on earth, and that there still existed bright creatures, whose affection it was happiness to share, and whose presence sufficed to banish the remembrance of all evil and all suffering. She looked up in her lover's face, which

beamed with the expression of all that is noble in human nature, and the joyful consciousness that she he loved was placed beyond the reach of Carlton's unprincipled pursuit, and she thought of her uncle Reginald and Lady Isabel's long cherished hopes, and she was happy.

What passed in the mind of Marion during this brief pause, was a mystery even to herself. Pale and motionless as one of the stone statues that decorated the chapel, she stood with her arms crossed upon her breast, and her eyes fixed on the ground. Visions of the past and of the future flitted by her like shadows, sad, dark, and wild. There was no hope to brighten the pictures, though one figure stood foremost amidst all, and one voice ever thrilled to the very depths of her heart. She felt no exultation at her triumph over Carlton—it could not restore the dead to her, nor wash away the stigma he had attached to her name; and as she beheld the glowing countenances of her companions she felt, with unntterable sorrow, yet without

a touch of envy, that she was cut off from reciprocal affection upon earth, and that whatever might be the feelings of her throbbing heart, they must corrode in silence there.

"Shame, shame on my folly," she thought, "have I not struggled with this weakness for years, and shall it now overcome me? No, no, again, as I have long done, I must forget my feelings in activity; I must forget myself in striving to secure the happiness of others."

Then brushing away the tears that filled her eyes, she stood firm, resolved, and collected; when the song of thanksgiving concluded, the abbot and monks left the chapel, leaving Father Francis alone with the fugitives.

With many friendly greetings, the worthy priest congratulated Hubert and Ellen on their almost miraculous escape, and then begged them to accompany him with Marion to the chambers devoted to the use of those who claimed the privilege of Sanctuary.

Thus saying, he took a large, heavy key, fastened by a chain to his girdle, and unclosed a door not far from the altar. Then holding his lamp within the low Norman arched passage beyond, he desired his companions to precede him up the narrow winding staircase that ascended thence. He himself entered last, placed a heavy chain across the door, and then ascended with the rest of the party, to a narrow open gallery which surrounded the chapel, and passed at intervals through the pillars which intersected it.

The effect of the beautiful building, with its monuments and its statues, its pictures and its banners, with a mixture of carving, gilding, and painting, then dimly visible from above in the half-extinguished lights, was solemn and impressive in the extreme; and Ellen felt a strange feeling of awe creep over her, when the voice of a solitary priest performing a midnight penance, echoed with long reverberations through every corner of

the building, as he sang the solemn words of the fifty-first Psalm.

To their guide, habit had made all these things familiar, and he paused not till he reached the door of the small cell destined for Ellen's use. It was formed in a part of the belfry, and low and vaulted, was just large enough to contain a simple pallet a chair, a table, and a wooden crucifix. The good Father Francis lighted a small lamp suspended from the ceiling, and then pointing to a change of attire he had found means to provide for the lady, he gave her his blessing, and, leaving the cell, he desired Hubert and Marion, who waited without, to accompany him to the apartment of the abbot. Taking a hasty farewell of Ellen, they quickly followed him, and ere long turned into another passage leading to the inhabited part of the monastery.

For a moment a shudder passed over the lady, when she was thus left alone, and she compared the home she had so recently lost with her lonely and cheerless cell, so far re-

moved from every other living creature. But when she remembered the danger and tumult of the past hours, the safety and peace she had found in her new abode, made it appear a paradise, and falling on her knees she offered up an ardent thanksgiving for the safety of herself and Hubert. Tranquillised and consoled by her devotions, she then lay down on her simple couch, and soon forgot all the horrors of the past, and the strangeness of her present position, in a profound sleep.

## CHAPTER X.

Though Hubert had visited more than one monastery, on different errands from Father Ambrose, he had never been admitted into the private apartments of an abbot, and had seen nothing of the magnificence frequently then to be found in those abodes. He was therefore greatly surprised when Father Francis, unclosing a small door with his master-key, suddenly admitted his companions into a square chamber, where two

large wax tapers were burning on a side table, and threw their bright rays over furniture of the most luxurious and costly description; in fact, Hubert thought it was a dwelling fit for a king, and, no doubt, many of the royal family were never so splendidly lodged. Pictures, in massive frames, covered the walls; carvings, colored to represent the dresses and faces of the persons who formed the groups, till they seemed living and acting, were yet more marvellous to one unskilled in art. Rich crimson silk curtains, from the looms of Italy, shaded the windows, and the tables, cabinets, and chairs were all carved with the most elaborate taste and industry. As if desirous to impress the youth with a profound respect for the greatness and wealth of his abbot, the monk thence conducted his companions through three other chambers of yet greater magnificence, ere he entered a small room at the end of a gallery, decorated with pictures, painted on wood, of the sufferings of our Saviour. The cabinet

itself was hung with tapestry of many colours, and every object it contained appeared of inestimable value, even to the golden inkstand that stood on a writing table covered with a Persian carpet.

A very handsome man, between forty and fifty years of age, attired in a furred gown of purple velvet, sat in a high-backed ebony chair, and, as he turned his head at the sound of footsteps, Marion and Hubert immediately recognized him to be the abbot, Morton.

Here, in repose, his appearance, as in the chapel was calm, dignified and majestic. His forehead was high and ample, his nose slightly aquiline, and his clear, large blue eyes, singularly expressive of benevolence and intellect. His long brown beard nearly reached his girdle, and completely concealed the lower part of his face. The black garments of his order hung in one corner of the room, near a bed, which was half concealed by sumptuous draperies.

The abbot, having slightly returned the

salutations of the strangers, laid aside the manuscript he was perusing, and made a sign to the monk to retire. He was no sooner obeyed, than turning quickly to Hubert, he said simply, "Young man, you have nobly fulfilled the task you undertook, and though you did not stipulate for any reward, I have sent for you hither to present you this purse of gold, in return for your gallant liberation of a Ward of the Crown from the power of an infamous intriguer."

"Your reverence must pardon me," said Hubert respectfully, "but you have mistaken my motives. I have not fought for money, and must decline to accept this gift."

"What means this?" returned the abbot, regarding the youth with curiosity, not unmingled with admiration. "We understood you were a simple soldier, and that our aid might be of service to you."

"I am a simple soldier, please your reverence," he replied, "but when I tell you that Lady Isabel Collingwood is my friend

and protectress, you will not be surprised that I decline to receive payment for any slight service, it has been my good fortune to render her grand-daughter: my debt of gratitude is already such as I can never hope to repay."

"If this be true," said the abbot, "it is probable you have no need of the letters of recommendation I was about to offer you, to a gentleman of high rank, who has engaged to join the Earl of Richmond, with a considerable body of men, as soon as he crosses the borders of Wales."

"I shall be most grateful for such a mark of your favor," answered Hubert eagerly. "It is true, I was furnished with papers, by Master Conyers, of Redesdale, of the contents of which I am ignorant, but during the recent fray, the hollow staff in which they were concealed, has either fallen, or been stolen from my girdle, and I have not only to regret my own loss, but the danger to others, which may be the consequence of the

discovery of some of the papers committed to my charge."

"I will order the passage to be searched," returned the abbot, "but I fear there is little chance of the staff being recovered. It is fortunate that affairs are now so near a crisis, that we have no longer fears of our enemies' discoveries, and, as far as regards yourself, this letter from me to Sir Gilbert Talbot, the guardian of the young Earl of Shrewsbury, will secure you a place under his banner, and if Conyers hath ought better to send you, it shall be forwarded to the army."

"The kindness of your reverence leaves me nothing to desire," was the young man's reply.

"There is a turret in the garden of the monastery, overhanging the walls," continued the priest, "and as it is prudent you should be out of the town as soon as possible, you must descend by a rope thence before day-break, and cross the Tyne

with all speed. At present, no doubt you have need of repose," and without waiting for other reply than the low reverence of Hubert, the abbot rang a small silver bell that stood beside him.

Father Francis almost instantly appeared, in answer to this summons, and making a silent sign to the young soldier, they left the chamber together.

Marion alone remained. She had scarcely moved since she entered the presence of the abbot. No word had passed her lips, and as the pale light of the silver lamp fell on her fair and delicate features, she had more the appearance of a marble figure than of a living creature. But her heart beat wildly—her hands burnt—and she felt a throbbing at the temples that for moments seemed to rob her of the power of thought. When Hubert had disappeared all this was redoubled.

The continued silence at length became too painful for endurance—she wished to

speak—she felt she lacked breath to give utterance to a word.

The abbot at that moment raised his eyes from a paper he had been perusing, and fixed them with a stern and searching glance on her face.

"Woman!" he said, struck by her ghastly paleness, "I have strong suspicions that the charges of Master Carlton against you are not so false as you asserted in the chapel. Your disguise, which you boldly avowed, is in itself suspicious, and I marvel how a good Catholic. like Master Conyers, could presume to pollute these holy walls, under any pretext, with the presence of his mistress."

"His mistress! oh, no! no! holy father," exclaimed Marion, in wild and piercing accents. "He has been my friend—my protector! but my lover—never! I am ready to swear by all things sacred, that what I assert is true! This garb has been assumed to defend me from the pursuit of the wicked, but never as a screen for vice."

"For the sake of Conyers, whom we have long known and valued as a trusty servant of our house, and the Lancastrian family, we would fain believe you speak truth," answered the churchman. "What reply can you make to the charge of heresy, which I find in these papers is registered against you, and a reward offered for your apprehension, at the same time that the execution of your father is announced: Brian Sandford, a Lollard, burnt on Tower Hill, for heresy, 1474—Robert Ballydon, sheriff."*

"Hear me! oh, hear me!" cried Marion, with a wild expression of despair that touched even the heart of the priest, although divided by his profession from the ordinary sympathies of humanity, and ere he could make the slightest opposition, she flung herself on her knees at his feet. With a look of unutterable agony, she kept her large eyes fixed upon his placid face, as with clasped hands, she struggled

* See Fabian's Chronicle, where the name alone is different.

silently for a fow moments to obtain the mastery over herself, so as to be able to restrain her tears.

"Most solemnly I declare to you, holy father, that I am innocent!" she at length murmured, in tremulous accents. "Whatever might be my father's belief, he never interfered with the religious education of his child; and my mother, a pious Catholic, brought me up in her faith. Carlton—Carlton is the cause of all—of my mother's death—my father's punishment! Oh, holy father! it was terrible—I saw it all—all!" she murmured, and she pressed her hands before her eyes, as if to shut out the fearful spectacle, that had haunted her by day and by night since Carlton had dragged her to behold the frightful scene. "I was young, very young—scarcely fifteen—and yet from that moment, I felt my life a burthen—a horror! I longed to die—but, oh! blessed Virgin, not by fire! Your reverence is full of compassion; you have rescued me once to-night from the persecutor, and if I must

perish, in pity save me from the flames. I would fain die with prayers upon my lips, not curses—yet I am weak—very weak—a woman, holy father!"

"If you are true and sincere in your confession," said the churchman mildly, "there is no necessity for these terrors."

"Yet, for ten years they have embittered my existence;" she returned, "for ten years I have lived like an excommunicated being amongst my fellow creatures; for ten years dwelling in a Christian land, I have feared to enjoy the consolations of my creed; my heart has been oppressed in silence and in solitude, by the weight of its transgressions and its sorrows. Ah! holy father, if to thee I dared to make confession—if to thee I dared reveal all the wild feelings, that are throbbing in my breast, even death would be deprived of half its terrors!"

"Speak," said the abbot solemnly. "Whatever may be your misdeeds, you should not have forgotten that the secrets of the confessional are sacred. Speak!"

An hour passed over ere this solemn interview approached a termination, and long and passionate was the tale related by the maiden to her listener.

The confession was at an end. Marion stood opposite the abbot, her arms crossed on her breast, her lips moving in silent thanksgiving, and an expression of ineffable peace and tranquillity pervading her whole figure.

The abbot stretched forth his hands, and blessed her, and the former doubtful expression of his countenance was replaced by that of mingled compassion and admiration, as he addressed the maiden.

"Thou art worthy to be a servant of the Church," he said, "whatever garb thou wearest; and after the tale I have heard, I no longer hesitate to intrust thee with a most important mission."

"My life is at your service," she replied.

"Hear me then," answered the priest. "The Lady Elizabeth, the daughter of Edward the Fourth, and the niece of the King,

is secretly affianced to the Earl of Richmond, all good men hoping that should he mount the throne of England, the interests of the rival houses of York and Lancaster will be united by this marriage, and the civil dissensions which have so long distracted the country, for ever concluded. Yet, after this engagement, and the murder of the young Princes, her sons, in the Tower, the weak Queen Dowager has been base enough to deliver her daughter into her uncle, King Richard's hands, who, having poisoned poor Anne, his wife, is exercising every means to compel his unhappy niece to accept his hand. She has hitherto nobly rejected his infamous propositions, but imprisoned in the same castle with the unfortunate son of the Duke of Clarence, and ignorant of all that is passing in the kingdom, it is to be feared that so young a maiden may submit at length to his wishes. Her friends, and the friends of Richmond, are anxious to convey to her tidings of his constancy—of his having landed in Wales—

of the success that has attended his progress, and of the hopes universally entertained, that in less than a fortnight, a successful battle with the usurper, will secure to him the crown of England."

"But methinks, it will be impossible for me to obtain an interview with the Princess," said Marion timidly.

"She is permitted to take daily exercise in a garden skirted by the park," he replied, "and should you fail in addressing her, I trust to your ingenuity to convey this letter to her hands," and he gave her a sealed paper as he spoke. As soon as Carlton has departed with his rabble soldiers, Mistress Ellen Collingwood will be sent, with a strong escort, to a convent only a few miles distant from Sherriffehuten, the prison of the Princess Elizabeth. As she will have need of a female companion, you must resume the dress of your sex, and accompany her thither, and fulfil my commission without loss of time. I trust you may depart to-morrow, and yet be several

hours in Carlton's rear. The Princess, when Queen, will, no doubt, in gratitude for your services, procure your pardon, and your long sufferings may be, at length, requited by years of happiness and honour."

Marion bowed her head meekly, but remained silent. Two large tears rolled over her pale cheeks, and fell to the ground unheeded. She was thinking of one cause for her sorrow, which it was not in the power of any royal personage to remove. The great can do much to alleviate the afflictions of their fellow creatures, but the affections are beyond their power. All that is most precious on earth is the gift of Heaven alone. The abbot had heard the secret of her soul that night, and he had soothed her agony, as far as he comprehended it, but there are some secrets too sacred for a woman's lips fully to explain ; she skims over the surface in spite of her utmost efforts to be candid ; the troubled depths of her soul remain undisclosed, and he who is not profoundly skilled in the mysteries of the human

heart—of a woman's heart—of its passionate ardour—the timidity—the shame—the self-reproach of unsought love, hears the whole tale without comprehending aught of the conflicts and despair of her who utters it. The abbot, though a clever and expert politician, and a pious and benevolent man, was little able to understand the character of Marion, but assured of her virtue and her piety, he pardoned the weakness of a heart whose troubles he thought self-created. This did not escape her : but it was not for the first time she learnt, how few are capable of fully comprehending the feelings of another.

When she retired to her cell, her momentary gleam of peace had vanished ; when she thought of the task she had undertaken, and her long separation from Master Conyers, her faithful protector, which the chances of war might render eternal, her prayers for his safety ended in tears, and long and bitterly she wept ere she lay down to repose.

On the morrow, at an early hour, there

was a slight tap at the door of Ellen's cell, and the next moment she was surprised by the entrance of a female, whom she received as an entire stranger. Slender, and delicately formed, her exceeding, though melancholy, beauty was rendered yet more remarkable by the extreme simplicity of her garb. She was clothed in a black gown of camlet mounting to the throat, which was almost entirely hidden by a small linen collar. A close, untrimmed cap, of the same material, left only the front of her head visible, and two rich tresses of her sable hair, that were parted from her high, pale brow. A long black scarf was thrown across her head, and hung down around her figure, nearly to the ground. Her oval face was pale and fair as alabaster; her mouth and nose nearly approached the models of Grecian art, and it was impossible to behold her large, dark, speaking eyes, without feeling that half her beauty was derived from the lofty and passionate soul by which their lustre was in-

spired. It was by those eyes that Ellen recognized her visitor.

"Marion," she immediately said, holding out her hand towards her, "this change delights me. This is as you should ever be, the graceful woman, whom no one can behold without acknowledging her pure and noble character."

"It is the wish of the abbot that I should resume the dress of my sex," she replied, "and with his protection, disguise is no longer necessary to my safety. It is his wish likewise, lady, that I should accompany you to the convent in Yorkshire, he has fixed on as your residence till the troubles of the kingdom have subsided, but think not, I beseech you, that my presumption is the cause of this. Alas! I well know, that one whose name has been branded with infamy, like mine, is utterly unworthy to be the companion of so noble and spotless a lady."

"Marion," said Ellen, solemnly, "I know

thou hast long dwelt amongst wild and lawless men; I know that thy habits have, for years, been far unlike those of thy sex, who live and die in a dull round of household duties; thou hast, thyself, declared, that the law has pronounced thy condemnation; but such has been thy noble conduct, and such the service thou has done myself and Hubert, that I cannot believe, that ought, either impure or base, can exist in thy soul."

Tears glistened on the long lashes of Marion's downcast eyes, and a slight blush tinged her pale cheeks. She answered not, but advanced towards the crucifix, suspended against the wall, fell on her knees before it, and, with clasped hands, said, in a low, clear voice, "In the presence of this gracious image, and of him by whom the secrets of all hearts are known and judged, I swear, by my hopes of future pardon, that I am innocent of all of which my enemies have accused me! Yes," she continued, arising, after a solemn pause, "I have dwelt amongst

lawless men, and bitter was the trial. Falsely accused, by the remorseless Carlton, pursued, even to the brink of the grave, no other home remained for me upon earth. Yet there, amongst strangers, torn from all the friends and pursuits of my youth, I could not sit down and spin! Memory would have driven me mad. I had neither hope nor pleasure upon earth—the future was a blank to me; this could not long be tranquilly borne; activity was necessary to the health of my soul, and I devoted myself to the service of others. Such is my history."

"And has no light of love, ever fallen upon this dark current?" inquired the lady, with a soft voice of pity.

"And if, perchance, there had, where could it lead, but to destruction?" cried Marion, starting, as if stung by a viper, at this unexpected question. "What honorable man, what being, worthy of a woman's love, could match himself with such a wretch as I am—condemned, and outlawed! the

miserable inheritrix of a father's infamy? no, no, lady, no! love were no light to me, but rather an evil shadow, making all other sorrows darker by its gloom. I trust, to you it may prove more blest, for Master Hubert hath a noble and a gallant soul, which must win honor in the strife of fortune, whatever be his birth."

"Have you seen him, Marion, since we parted?" eagerly demanded Ellen.

"He left the town this morning ere the dawn," was the reply. "He was furnished by the abbot, with letters of recommendation to Sir Gilbert Talbot, with whom it is his intention to take up arms against the usurper."

"And I shall see him no more till the fate of the war is decided!" exclaimed the lady, whilst large tears filled her eyes. "I shall hear no tidings of him, and should he perish on the field of battle, I may never know where is his grave."

"Conyers will be with the army," returned her companion, tremulously.

"And Yorkshire is nearer the scene of strife than here," was Ellen's reply. "Master Conyers must send me frequent tidings, and I trust, Marion, he will be able to find means to inform Lady Isabel of my escape."

"He will leave nothing untried to liberate her, also, from captivity," said Marion.

"Would to heaven he may succeed," exclaimed Ellen, eagerly, "for I have many fears on her account. Her captivity is a fearful trial to one at her advanced age."

At this moment their conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Father Francis. To their infinite satisfaction, he announced that Carlton had left the town at the dawn of day with his followers, and that as he was known to have taken the road to the west, the abbot had given orders that all should be prepared for their journey south, as soon as possible.

Ellen and Marion were both excellent horsewomen; for, except in litters, a tedious mode of conveyance, there was no other

mode of travelling then in use, and both joyfully prepared for their departure.

Before they left the monastery, they were conducted, by the abbot's desire, to his presence. He was no longer in his private chamber, but seated in his vast library, attired in the full dress of his order, and surrounded by all that the learning and art of the fifteenth century could contribute to enhance the natural dignity of this noble and venerable minister of religion.

He received the lady and her companion with simple and gentle courtesy—made no allusion to the past, but spoke with ardent hopes of the happy days approaching for Old England. He desired Marion to send him a special messenger, with an account of the event of her mission, wished them a prosperous journey, and then rising from his chair, gave them his parting benediction with kindness and solemnity.

This concluded, they immediately proceeded to take horse, and surrounded by a strong guard, rode from the monastery.

Thus defended, they traversed in fearless tranquillity the streets which they had passed the previous night, in terror and anxiety. It was with difficulty the horses held their footing, as they descended the steep narrow street leading to the river, and the high wooden houses with their long casement windows and gable roofs, black with the coal-smoke, were of such gloomy aspect, that Ellen rejoiced to escape from their shadows. As they passed along the Gothic bridge over the Tyne, both she and Marion paused to gaze with admiration on the broad, deep river, even then animated by numerous craft, and on the stern old castle, founded by the son of William the Conqueror, which arose on the banks. Then resuming their way, they passed the stone that marks the confines of the county of Durham, slowly ascended the almost perpendicular street of Gateshead—the miserable suburb of Newcastle, until they at length reached the summit of the desolate fell, which bears its name. Then was their long and difficult

ascent, rewarded by the wide and varied prospect.

On one side, the eye wandered over the sweeping hills that inclose the valleys of Ravensworth and Tyne; on the other, the landscape was bounded by the ocean, whose horizon, mingling with the sky, extended north and south till all distinction between them was lost in the distance.

But ere the travellers had long enjoyed the light breeze that came from the sea, a heavy cloud gathered over the landscape. Thicker and thicker it closed around them, till when they reached Durham, the noble cathedral, the bishop's palace, and all the beautiful scenery of that picturesque city were entirely hidden from their view; and long before they arrived at their place of repose for the night, a small misty rain fell thick and fast, and rendered the cheerful fires and plentiful repast prepared for them doubly welcome.

Without other adventure or misfortune, they arrived on the third day at the convent

in Yorkshire, which the abbot of the Black-friars had chosen as the temporary residence of Ellen. The abbess, to whom he was nearly related, no sooner perused his letter than she gave the most honorable and friendly reception to the lady and her companion; and had Ellen been assured of the welfare of Hubert and Lady Isabel, she would have welcomed with pleasure the interval of tranquillity and repose that awaited her in the walls of this peaceful nunnery.

## CHAPTER XI

HUBERT having in all things obeyed the directions of the abbot, happily effected his escape from the town of Newcastle, and his passage over the river Tyne. The remainder of his long journey to the residence of Sir Gilbert Talbot, proved equally fortunate, although his ingenuity and courage were frequently put in requisition, to effect his passage through the forces everywhere assembling for the service of the king.

But on his arrival at the knight's dwelling, his disappointment was great to find that he had departed three days before, with his own followers and those of his young ward, the Earl of Shrewsbury, to join the army of the Earl of Richmond, who, after successfully passing through Wales, and seeing his forces every day increased by the accession of many noble and honorable gentlemen, was now marching rapidly towards London. But as recruits were ever welcome, and Hubert's letter of recommendation was of a nature not to be neglected, he was immediately furnished by the steward of the knight with a good horse and all necessary equipments. Unwilling to lose even an hour, lest a battle should take place before he reached the army, he then set forward with all speed towards Lichfield, as it was expected the Earl of Richmond would tarry a brief space in that city to refresh his troops.

Many and anxious were the thoughts that filled his mind during his journey, as to the fate of Ellen, from whom he had been so

abruptly parted ; and there were times when the remembrance of their difference of rank weighed down his heart with sorrow, and the treatment he had received from the abbot, painfully convinced him that the poor soldier could entertain no hope of ever again being permitted to enter the society of the wealthy and beautiful Ward of the Crown, whose hand would, in all probability, be given to some titled favorite of royalty without the feelings of her heart being consulted. Were he proved to be the rightful heir of Collingwood, it was true, he had less cause for despair ; but he felt that would be difficult, nay, almost impossible ; and though one hour he built the highest castles of felicity, at others, he remembered only the humility of his position, and the apparent improbability that his wishes should ever be accomplished.

It was not that he feared that Ellen might despise his poverty ; she had already passed the ordeal of the Court, and brought back her love undiminished, for the companion of

her childhood; but he was too proud to wish, that she should be humiliated by an alliance with one so poor and friendless, and he loved her too sincerely to be capable of lowering the object of his attachment in the eyes of her equals, for his own gratification.

"I can bear the contempt of the haughty and the great, alone," he thought—"it is my lot; but to feel that even the proudest in the land, who fancy that birth or riches give them the privilege of insolence, could presume to look down on Ellen with scorn, and that for me she was thus humbled —no, no, forbid it, heaven—I would rather die unknown, and unwept in the approaching battle, amidst the common herd, o'er whom no tomb bears record, than live to call her by the tender name of wife, thus dearly purchased!"

Whilst these reflections passed through Hubert's mind, the shades of evening were deepening rapidly around him, and the last red rays of the departed sun were only to be seen at intervals, between the branches of

the trees that skirted the narrow lane along which he rode. He had every reason to believe, that though he had not travelled in the track of the Earl of Richmond's army, he was now at no great distance from it, and as his horse had already come far that day, he had resolved to stop that night at a farm-house, whither he had been recommended by a good Lancastrian peasant, at whose cottage he had passed an hour at noon, to refresh himself and his steed.

On the cross roads he had purposely chosen, he had met few passengers during the day; all wanderers had followed in the track of the army, which he learned towards evening, from a countryman who had been thither with provisions, was expected to remain at Tamworth for the night.

He was proceeding at a slow pace, in that dreamy state of mind, so often excited by twilight, when he heard another horseman gradually, but rapidly gaining ground upon him. He knew no fear, but with a caution necessary in such times, he

felt if his arms were all in order ; but though he soon knew that the rider was close behind him, he continued to proceed at the same quiet pace, without appearing to notice his approach.

"Holoa!" cried the horseman, the next minute in a loud voice, "have I the good luck to find one of you at last! I began to think I should have to pass the night alone, amongst the bushes ; for, by St. George, I have never seen a living man since we parted company till now, and I lacked courage to approach the houses to inquire my way to the army. But what do I see?—thou art none of my company, after all, young gentleman!" he added, in a voice of amazement, when, having gained the side of Hubert, he suddenly reined in his horse, and surveyed the youth from head to foot with an enquiring glance.

Neither did Saville fail to examine the person of the stranger, who thus cavalierly addressed him, as well as the dim twilight enabled him to do. His horse and his ar-

mour were evidently those of a man of high rank; his figure was thin and tall, and though his closed visor concealed his face, his whole appearance and bearing was so decidely noble that Hubert involuntarily raised his hand to his steel cap, in token of respect, ere he addressed him—

"I know not, Master, who may be your companions," he said with easy simplicity, "I only know that I travel alone."

"And may I ask, whither you are bound?" inquired the stranger.

"Like yourself—to the army," was the young man's cautious answer.

"To the king's army?" was the rejoinder.

"Pardon me," replied Saville, "but this is a question you have no right to ask, and I am not obliged to answer."

"Then I am, of course, to conclude, you are bound for that of his rival, the Earl of Richmond," returned the horseman, with a slight laugh.

Hubert made no reply.

There was a short pause, during which,

the stranger continued to keep pace with him, and he was aware, that he more than once attentively examined him, like one who was anxious to ascertain if he had aught to dread from the companion whom chance had thus thrown in his way. The result was apparently satisfactory, for he ere long renewed the conversation by saying—

"You seem to be well acquainted with the country through which we are travelling."

"I have not been afraid to ask my way," was Hubert's reply, as he cast a sly glance at his companion; but the darkness was now a sufficient visor, even had his face been fully exposed to view.

"And do you purpose travelling the whole night to the army?" was the quiet rejoinder of the stranger.

"I suspect my journey will finish for to-night where you see yonder twinkling lights," said the young man, pointing to the gleam of a taper from a cottage window, abour a quarter of a mile before them.

"And to-morrow you proceed to join the army ?"

"If I live !"

"And you know exactly where it is to be found ?"

"I can ask," returned Hubert, with a laugh, "and surely, however quickly it may have started into existence, it is not one of those meteors that passes without leaving a trace of its course."

"You are cautious, young man," said the unknown, "and you are right, for these are times when strangers are little to be trusted; but to be frank, I would gladly share your night's lodging, and then to-morrow, perhaps, we may be less unwilling to disclose to which army we are bound."

"I have no doubt the good people to whose house I am going, will gladly receive us both, if assured that we are good pay-masters, and friends," returned Hubert; with a peculiar accent on the last word, "but give me leave to ask, how they are to be assured of that ?"

"And do you believe, that the people of

their class are so strongly divided between the rival parties?" demanded the stranger, with evident interest.

"The long dissensions of York and Lancaster have left deep wounds, that were not yet closed, when this new civil-war tore them open afresh," was Hubert's reply. "The peasantry have not forgotten the friends they lost during the former troubles, and gladly seize the occasion to revenge their death."

"And hath such a feeling likewise impelled you to take sword in hand?" demanded the stranger.

"I prefer the life of a soldier to that of a monk," was the reply.

"Then probably you concern yourself little, for which side you draw your sword in this important contest for the throne?"

"Pardon me! I consider that the man who sells himself to slay his fellow creatures without reference to the justice of the cause for which he fights, is no better than a hired assassin. I may have erred, from ignorance,

in the selection of the party to which I have engaged myself; but I have been at least guided in my choice by the opinions of honorable men. But here we are at our night's quarters, sir, if you are still desirous of sharing my host's hospitality?"

"I fear I can do no better at this hour," was the reply of the stranger, as Hubert sprang from his horse, "and if you are honest, there appears little reason to be apprehensive of danger here."

"I give you my word, as a soldier," returned the youth, "that if you will trust to my protection, whether you be for York or Lancaster, no evil shall befal you in this house, even though my life be the forfeit. By the saints, sir, what do you fear? we are both Englishmen, and enemies alone — if enemies we be — on the field of battle. I have never questioned you as to your party, though you have been so inquisitive about mine! it concerns me not; so be frank and merry, and no man shall know aught of you in this house, but as my friend."

"Thus let it be," answered the unknown, and following Hubert's example, he sprang without further hesitation from his weary horse, and proceeded with the bridle in his hand towards the cottage.

The door was speedily opened, in answer to Hubert's lusty knock, by the old farmer who was its occupant. John Grey was an old, thin man, in a smock frock, with a long white beard, and he at first seemed not a little dismayed by the appearance of two armed horsemen before his door. But a few whispered words from Hubert soon dispelled his fears, and calling his daughter to take the horses to the stable, he gave the strangers a most kindly welcome.

The kitchen they entered was poorly furnished, but clean, and an iron pot boiling on the blazing wood fire, sent forth a fragrant steam.

"Ah, ha, gentlemen," he said, as he placed a mug of ale before his guests, flanked by a brown loaf and a new milk cheese, "you are for the wars, it seems—quite right—so was

I once, but those days are past ; heaven be praised, I have two sons to take my place, and they are both of the right sort, I promise you—true to the back bone. They can never forget that our comfortable dwelling was burned above our heads, and that their mother perished in the flames. They were but babes, it is true—but I have told them the story over and over—especially since I lost the power to draw a bow-string myself —and thank God, I have lived to send them both forth to fight in the right cause."

"And have you no fear that your house may be burned a second time, in these new troubles ?" inquired the stranger, who would rather have asked to which party his host belonged, but he felt the imprudence of betraying his ignorance of his politics.

"If heaven wills it, so be it," answered the old peasant. "I have lived through so much trouble in my youth, that I have lost all fear in my old age. I am near the grave, master, at any rate, and if my sons should chance to fall in the war, they may burn my

house, or do what they please, I should have no thought for anything but death; and if, on the other hand, this Earl of Richmond has no better luck than the Duke of Buckingham, his head will soon be on the block, and the whole matter at an end, that's all. Drink, sir—you don't drink!" he added, looking up suddenly in the face of the stranger, who, after some hesitation, had now removed his steel head-piece.

Hubert likewise, with no slight curiosity, fixed his eyes upon his countenance, which appeared slightly agitated, during the last words of the farmer. He was of a fair and florid complexion, with a long, thin face, strongly expressive of caution and reserve, and of gravity, more than usual at his years; for he could, evidently, not be more than eight and twenty. Though not decidedly handsome, his countenance had a calm, noble expression, that confirmed Hubert's first impression that he was a man of high rank.

"What is the opinion of the generality

of the people in this part of the world of this young invader—this said Earl of Richmond," he inquired, as, with apparent carelessness, he replenished his ale mug, in obedience to Grey's invitation.

"Some say one thing, and some say another," he replied. "Our parish clerk insists that he is somewhat inclined to be niggardly; but, as I told him, that is no wonder, for he had no pence to throw away in foreign parts, where he had nothing to live on for years, but the savings his mother could squeeze out of her lord's housekeeping, and send him over in secret."

"That was wisely spoken," said the unknown, who had crumbled a piece of bread into twenty morsels, whilst he listened to the old man's last words.

"And I warrant, true enough," rejoined Grey, "and then the last reports are, that he is more prudent than daring, and prefers counsel to hard blows."

"Ah, is he a coward as well as a miser?" demanded the unknown, in a voice whose

altered tone did not escape Hubert's observation.

"The saints forgive you; but I said neither the one nor the other!" exclaimed the farmer, "He may be as lavish as Edward the Fourth, and as brave as hump-backed Richard, for aught I know to the contrary. I speak only from report, and report you know, sir, tells wondrous tales, according as the wind sits. I warrant he is a saint with the Lancastrians, and a very devil incarnate with the Yorkists, as the king has drawn him in his last proclamation, but, for my part, I believe nothing I hear, so then I know I make no mistakes."

"Father, father!" cried the maiden, who at this moment burst into the kitchen. "Here comes another party of soldiers, as sure as my name is Peggy Grey."

"Are they king's men, or rebels?" demanded the old man, eagerly. "Shut the door girl; shut the door, and perhaps they'll go further up the lame to Farmer Dodd's."

The stranger looked very anxiously at

Hubert, who answered the glance by laying his hand on his sword, and whilst Peggy, with true female presence of mind, threw ashes on the fire to smother the flames, whose light gleamed invitingly through the window, the the unknown, without uttering a word, hastily resumed his helmet, and changed his place to the bench where Hubert sat.

"Rely on me, whatever happens," whispered the young man, as he did so.

Immediately afterwards, four foot soldiers wearing a livery, which Hubert recognised to be that of the Duke of Norfolk, an ardent royalist, and each fully armed, entered the kitchen, without even using the ceremony of demanding admission.

"In the name of the king, good cheer and quarters for the night," cried the first, a huge, black brawny fellow, who, to all appearance had only recently exchanged the forge hammer for the battle-axe. "Ha, you have company already, my old master!—rebels, I dare be sworn, by the cut of them;" he added, as he advanced towards the fire,

followed by his companions, and cast an insolent glance at Hubert and the stranger, who remained quietly seated.

"I advise you to put a guard on your tongue when you are in the company of your betters, my good master," said the young soldier, coolly. "Your master may chance to hear of your insolence sooner than you expect."

"And what, by old Blackbeard hast thou to do with my master, young Malapert?" demanded the fellow, in a somewhat softer tone. "If you are rebels, march out at that door, bofore I can count ten, or it may be worse for you; but if you are king's men, say so, and let us empty a barrel of this old fellow's ale together, without more wrangling."

"And gallant servants we should be for the king, in truth," said Hubert, with a quiet sneer, "if we submitted to speak or be silent at the command of every insolent varlet that wears a lord's livery. Keep your catechisms for apprentices and cowards, for

I tell you plainly, I answer no man who presumes to ask me impertinent questions. You may be a traitor in disguise for aught I I know, and I carry an axe as well as yourself."

Half in doubt whether he might not have erred in his first suspicions, the soldier made no reply, but commanding Peggy to place benches around the table, he seated himself with his companions, whilst Grey placed a huge mug of ale before them, and the maiden prepared to serve up the contents of the iron pot.

The soup, which she had prepared for the family supper was very inadequate to satisfy the appetite of half-a-dozen hungry men, and when she placed the bowl before Hubert and the stranger, the new comers loudly declared that no one should partake of it but themselves.

Anxious to avoid dispute, they pretended not to hear this insolence, but resolved not to be brow-beaten; when the others were served, the youth coolly drew the dish to-

wards him, and served his companion and himself.

"You are confoundedly impertinent, Master," cried the man of the forge, who having swallowed a considerable portion of strong liquor during his march, from a bottle at his side, and already drunk freely of the farmer's ale, was just in that state of confusion which makes some men ready to quarrel for a straw.

"I am confoundedly hungry," was Hubert's reply, and he followed the observation by swallowing spoonful after spoonful of the mess before him.

"And who may that silent fellow be?" cried another of the men, "who leaves the young bird to fight his battles, whilst he sits as mute as an owl at sunrise."

"A traitor, I'll be sworn," cried a third, "or he would not sip his soup in that fashion, with his visor down to the tip of his nose, as if he feared to make even his spoon acquainted with his countenance."

"By the saints, thou art right, Robin," rejoined the leader of the party. "Up with your visor, Sir Knight, Baron, or whatever you may be, up with your visor, and drink a health to the king, and death to the traitor Richmond, or, by St. George, my axe and thy head shall soon be better acquainted. Dost thou hear? or art thou deaf, as well as dumb?" he cried, springing from his seat, and swinging his mighty weapon around his shoulders with ferocious menace, when he saw the stranger, instead of obeying his command, entirely closing his helmet. "This insolence is not to be borne," he shouted, "and pushing down the planks that supported them, he sprang forward, followed by the rest of his party, as rapidly as the confusion permitted, to attack the object of his rage.

This slight delay afforded the noble stranger and Hubert full time to put themselves in a posture of defence, but to the increased anger of the half drunken soldiers, it was the latter who stood forward between

him and the unknown, his axe raised on high, and his powerful figure elevated with an expression of the most resolute defiance.

"He who dares approach a step nearer, dies on the spot," he said, in an accent of command that arrested the movements of the intoxicated soldiers he addressed, as much by the astonishment as the terror it inspired. "By heaven, you are bitterly mistaken, if you expect to frighten us, either by your threats, or your battle-axes. Did I think it worth my while to punish your insolence as it deserves, I would soon make you repent your audacity. How do you know that we are not as loyal servants of the king as yourselves?" and he cast an expressive glance at the unknown, as he spoke—"Do you think, because you have changed your tinker's jacket for a Lord's livery, that every honorable gentleman you may chance to meet, is to drink your toasts at your bidding? you must mend your manners, sirrah, if you do not wish to find

yourself shorter by a head, before the night is over. Others may prove less patient than we have been, and to teach you to be more careful another time, ere you presume to insult his Majesty's servants of our own free pleasure, we will do that, which, not all thy insolence, though you are five to two, should have compelled us to do: we will drink the king's health, and confusion to his enemies," and with another glance at the stranger, Hubert warned him to follow an example so necessary to avoid a useless brawl.

"And who, by the mass, may you be, young gentleman, who presumes to lecture us in this fashion," demanded the tinker, dropping the point of his axe to the ground in wonder and consternation, utterly subdued by the boldness and decision thus unexpectedly displayed by Hubert.

"That is no concern of such as thou, returned the youth, haughtily. "Take heed, I tell thee, of thine own conduct, or thou mays't chance to hear more of me where it may be worse for thee. A health to the

king, and confusion to his enemies!" and suiting the action to the word, he replenished his own mug and that of the stranger. The latter, convinced on reflection that no one there could recognise him, now fully raised his visor, and repeating the toast, whilst a slight smile played about the corners of his mouth, he emptied his foaming cup at the same time with his young defender.

"And now, most pot-valiant soldiers," said Hubert, when he had finished his draught, and all present had drank his toast with clamor and uproar, "you have learnt that we are ready to do honor to the king's name, though not to submit to your insolence, and it is time we should part. It has been truly said, the chances of war bring men into strange company, but, by St. George, there is no necessity for honorable gentlemen to remain in it, except on the field of battle. Master Grey, lead on with your lantern, and shew us where we are to pass the night. These brave campaigners may drink till daylight, if it be their

pleasure ; we have no wish to be a restraint on their amusement."

The old farmer, who had been a trembling spectator of the whole, foregoing, scene, instantly understood, and fulfilled the desire of his guest, by conducting him and his companion from the back door, although he had never before thought of lodging such guests in an outhouse.

"By the mass, we had like to have got into a pretty scrape with your drunken brawls," cried the most sober of the soldiers, the moment the trio had disappeared. "I dare be sworn, the youngest of those two is a Percy or a Neville, and we shall be reported at head-quarters, as sure as thou wert a tinker. Thou mightest have known at a glance, if all thy life had not been passed in hammering copper kettles, that those were no paltry fellows, to dance at thy bidding."

"We shall see—we shall see," muttered the tinker. "I would swear for a farthing they are a couple of traitors, in spite of all

the young one's palaver ; and, by the saints, if they are traitors, worth catching—"

"Then you may catch them yourself, Peter, for I will be hanged if I risk my life in such a mad exploit!"

"Nor I."—"Nor I."—"Nor I," cried the party, one after another. "Who knows but that tall fellow may be Lord Lovell, or Castesby, or some of the king's spies, travelling on some of his secret errands."

"Ay, who indeed! no, no, go to sleep, Peter ; that will do thee more good than cutting off the heads of the king's favorites."

A loud laugh accompanied this sage advice, nor was it long till the deep breathing of the tinker proved that his large potations had effectually secured his obedience.

Hubert and the unknown had, in the mean time, crossed the court-yard at the back of the house, to a stable beyond, guided by the old man and his lantern.

"Young man," said the stranger, addressing Hubert the moment the door was closed

behind them, "I shall never forget that this night I am indebted to you for my life. Your courage, presence of mind, and ready invention, have saved us both; and I trust that the time is not far distant when I may be able to prove to you that my power to requite such a benefit is greater than you probably at present imagine. I cannot doubt you drank to the king's health to prevent a contemptible brawl, in which, death would have been dishonor, and it is therefore needless to conceal from you, that I am on my way to the army of the Earl of Richmond."

"And I have already sworn to devote my life to his service," returned Hubert, "though, as you rightly imagine, I thought it folly to throw away our lives for the sake of half-a-dozen words, in a drunken skirmish."

"You were right," said the stranger, "and yet, so noble was your compliance, that whilst you yielded, you made the scoundrels tremble before you."

"Yet, methinks, it will be most prudent not to count upon their terrors, but to take horse and depart with all speed."

"The animals have need of rest as well as ourselves," returned the unknown. "But have no fears. I prefer a couple of hours' sleep among that fresh hay, to wandering through the dark lanes till daylight on a jaded horse."

"Thou art right," interposed the farmer, "I dare be sworn, as long as these fellows have a mug of ale before them, they will give you no more trouble, and if you will lie down to sleep, I, or my daughter will keep watch in the kitchen, and give you warning if there appears the least danger of your being disturbed; you can then mount and be off over the fields before they have discovered where you lodge."

"This is prudent counsel," answered the unknown, "and were I sure that all was going on quietly in the house, and that you would rouse me an hour before daylight, I would follow that young man's example,

who, I see, is already half asleep in the manger."

"I will engage that on both these points you shall be satisfied," said the farmer, and without further delay, he wished his guest a good repose, and returned to the kitchen.

After his departure, the stranger paced the stable with long, slow steps, as if his mind was engaged by subjects of the deepest and most agitating interest. Once or twice he paused to gaze with envy on Hubert, who already slept profoundly; but it was not till Grey returned, having been absent half-an-hour, to tell him that the soldiers, after large potations, had lain down to slumber around the fire, that he at length ventured to take the repose, of which the fatigues of many days made him have great need.

True to his word, the farmer roused him at the appointed hour; and to his surprise, he found Hubert already before the door of the stable, with the horses ready for their journey.

It was with the utmost difficulty that

Grey would accept the slightest remuneration from his guests; "he was contented," he said, "to have served two noble gentlemen of the right party, and if he had to regale those five rapacious servitors of the usurper for nothing, he might surely be allowed to lodge the friends of the Earl of Richmond for his own pleasure."

"Although he be a miser and a coward, eh, Master Grey?" said the stranger, with a peculiar smile, as he mounted his horse, and threw a gold piece, the old man had refused, on the ground.

"Oh, young gentleman, you are malicious! you forgot I told you report was a liar," cried Grey, as his guests rode laughing out of the court. "That is some noble in disguise, but, whoever he be, he is a more generous paymaster than Richmond, I dare be sworn," he muttered, as he picked up the coin, and returned to look after the soldiers, who were still sleeping in the kitchen.

## CHAPTER XII.

Hubert and his unknown companion, pursued their way, with rapidity and silence, down a narrow lane, which the farmer had directed them to follow as their nearest road to Tamworth. He had already learned, that the army of the Earl of Richmond had encamped in that neighbourhood. The sun had not arisen, and all nature was still and peaceful around them, in the clear grey light

of morning, and had they not been aware of the distracted state of the kingdom, they might have passed on amidst the verdant meadows, unsuspicious of the proximity of two powerful armies, whose conflict was shortly to decide, not only the destiny of their commanders, but of the whole nation.

Hubert was the first to make this observation to his companion, but though the stranger had at length declared his attachment to the party of Richmond, he was still evidently unwilling to discourse of public affairs, and his whole conversation was so guarded and reserved, that strange suspicions began to intrude on the young man's mind, as to the nature of his business at the camp, when he was surprised by his abruptly demanding of him, with whom it was his intention to serve, when he reached the army.

"I have letters recommending me to Sir Gilbert Talbot," was the reply.

"A brave man, and a true," answered the

unknown, "and I can truly say, you deserve to be his officer."

"A poor youth, like myself," said Hubert, "can hope for no higher honor than of fighting under his banner."

"Ha! you carry arms only as a common soldier?"

"No more, and I am indebted for my horse and equipments to the recommendation of the abbot of the Blackfriars of Newcastle, who has honored me by his protection."

"The brother of Morton, Bishop of Ely, and a true friend of all Lancastrians!" returned the stranger. "This speaks well for you, my brave defender; and though you have neither told me your name nor family, I presume they are noble, though your parents may perhaps have been involved in the misfortunes of the civil wars."

"I am alike ignorant of my parents, or their destiny," was the reply, "and I have no other fortune than this good sword and axe, with which I have sworn to win an honorable name, or die in the attempt."

"Bravely spoken," returned his companion, whilst he regarded him with evident approbation, "and I am a witness, that during our brief acquaintance at least, thou hast gallantly fulfilled thy oath. Take my word for it, thy reward shall not be wanting. But tell me, is not that the camp, we see stretching along those open fields, about a league distant to the south east ?"

"Yes, yes, in truth !" exclaimed Hubert. "I see the glitter of arms in the rising sun, and those white, waving lines must be tents, and those, the watch fires, whence the smoke is rising. If we put spurs to our horses down this slope, we can be there in half an hour to take our places in the ranks, before the morning march commences."

"My brave defender," said the stranger, laying his hand on the arm of Hubert, so as to detain him for a moment, ere he put his proposition in execution, "in addition to the service you have already rendered me, I have yet another to demand. Let all that has passed this night, remain a

profound secret between us. I cannot now explain to you my reasons for this request; you may, ere long, perhaps, divine them. Let it suffice, for me to say, that your silence as to the manner in which I have passed this night, is to me a matter of importance, and will be more likely to prove to our advantage, than the publication of our adventure."

"As you please," returned Hubert, simply, though internally wondering at so strange a request. "I, for my own part, have nothing to relate; for a brawl with a party of drunken soldiers is nothing uncommon in these rude times."

"Perhaps some of the circumstances are more uncommon than you at present imagine," replied the unknown. "But in spite of any future discoveries you may make, I presume that I may count on your silence."

"I give you my word, as a soldier, that not a syllable shall pass my lips, with regard to our joint adventure," returned

Hubert, holding out his hand to his companion, who clasped it in his mailed fingers, with a brief expression of thanks.

The horsemen then both rapidly resumed their way down the declivity, and neither spoke till they reached a spot where two roads met, both evidently leading towards the camp, now not a quarter of a mile before them. A party of gentlemen in full armour, accompanied by a standard-bearer, and a guard of about twenty horsemen, was visible about midway down the lane to the right. No sooner had the stranger observed them, than he suddenly checked his horse once more, and when Hubert followed his example, told him in rapid words that they must part.

"I see friends," he said, "whom it behoves me to join without delay, and whilst I ride towards them, let me beg you to take the opposite road to the camp. Though I am compelled to quit you thus abruptly, I will not forget your services, if you remember your promise. Farewell! we shall meet

again on the field of battle! Your gallantry and your silence shall not fail of their reward. Farewell!"

So saying, the stranger put spurs to his horse, and without waiting any reply from Hubert, gallopped down the road towards his friends. Only once he turned his head to ascertain if the young man had taken the course he had directed, and then, assured that he had already disappeared behind the sloping hill, he pursued his way without further anxiety.

But though Hubert complied with this strange request, it was not without being irritated, and somewhat mortified by the apparently ungrateful conduct of the stranger.

"I risked my life for him in the moment of danger," he thought, "and yet ashamed of my company, he shakes me off as soon as he has no further need of my services. A gallant gentleman! who pays with promises that cost him nothing. But he need not fear that I shall make him any troublesome demands. Be he who he may, I have done

no more for him than I would for a beggar, who needed my aid, and if he is too proud to be thankful, it is quite certain I shall never claim his acquaintance ; for the future, let him be served by his noble friends, if he prefers them."

He had now mounted a slight eminence commanding a view over the surrounding country for many miles, and with a natural feeling of curiosity, he turned for a moment to observe the movements of his late companion. He was at that moment on the point of joining the party he had declared to be his friends, and to the utter amazement of Hubert, the whole company received him with heads uncovered, and every evidence of the utmost honor and respect. A slight pause—apparently of conversation and explanation followed—and then the unknown putting himself at the head of the party, rode on with him towards the camp.

"He must be some truly great man, after all!" was now Hubert's altered reflection, "and I have probably erred in attributing

that to ingratitude, and mean pride, which was only necessary policy."

Perplexed thoughts, as to the real character of his unknown companion, continued to occupy his mind till he reached the army, and then a scene so utterly different from all he had hitherto beheld, met his view, that his attention was for the time entirely absorbed by the objects before him, and the efforts necessary to discover the quarters of Sir Gilbert Talbot.

The slant beams of the sun fell brightly over the scene, and seemed to animate the soldiers, as they hurried to and fro, some raising the tents and loading the baggage waggons, others burnishing the arms of their chiefs, or busy around the large fires, cooking a morning meal for the troops. Amidst the apparent confusion, mirth and good humour everywhere prevailed. All seemed conscious that they were engaged in a good cause, and all secure of victory. On one side, a party of Bretons, who had accompanied their lord, were singing the gay songs of their country

as they buckled on their armour ; then the good soldiers of the Welchman, Sir Walter Herbert, were regaling themselves with a frugal repast of bread and leeks, whilst a grey haired Harper sought to arouse their warlike spirits to new deeds of honor, by chanting the exploits of their ancestors.

Vainly did Hubert look around for the Redesdale men, with the anxious hope that Conyers might be already there, and some tidings awaiting him of Ellen and Lady Isabel ; and his disappointment was great, when, in answer to his inquiries, he was informed, they had not yet joined the army. When he at length arrived at the tent of Sir Gilbert Talbot, the knight was on the point of mounting his horse, to take his place at the head of his troop, already in full order of march. But he no sooner learned that Hubert was the bearer of letters from the Abbot of the Blackfriars, than he immediately gave orders that he should be conducted to his presence.

Even in that moment of hurry and confusion, he gave him a most gracious reception, and hastily glancing his eye over the papers he delivered to him, and surveying the noble figure of the young man with evident satisfaction, he commanded that he should be assigned a place in the guard that rode near his own person.

"My friend, the abbot, speaks highly of you," he said, addressing Hubert, ere he mounted his impatient charger, and I trust you will ere long have occasion to prove you are not unworthy of his commendations. Remember that you fight for St. George and Old England, and that by dint of sword, you must carve your way to honor."

"By my conduct, Sir Gilbert, it shall be my endeavour to prove, that I am not unworthy of the confidence with which you honor me," replied Hubert, "and believe me, I would sooner die

than fail in the duties of the post you have assigned me."

"Bravely spoken, young man, and now to horse," returned the knight. "I hear the Earl of Richmond is impatient to depart, and it is time I were at his tent to take my station, with my guard, at his right hand. To horse, young man, to horse, and follow me with all speed."

The trumpets sounded loud and clear, and spurring forward the charger he had already mounted, the knight, in full armour, with the white plumes of his helmet waving in the air, and his lances glittering in the sunbeams, rode forward rapidly to the tent of his general.

Hubert, who had immediately obeyed his command, and sprung lightly on his saddle, followed amidst the gallant throng that formed his guard, and the braying of the trumpets, and the roll of the drums, and the neighing and clattering

of the impatient horses, and the universal animation around him, filled his soul with new ardour for the profession he had chosen.

Eager to behold the Earl of Richmond, whom, even when a boy, Henry the Sixth had already pronounced predestined to be King of England, and whom all honest men regarded as their liberator from the detested dominion of Richard the Third, Hubert anxiously begged the horseman at his side, to point out to him their General, as soon as he came forth from his tent.

"There—there, to the right," cried the soldier, in reply, as a loud shout rent the air, and a party of knights rode at full gallop down the sloping ground towards them. "See—see, that tall cavalier, with his visor up, who rides amidst that knot of horsemen, and whom all salute as he passes. Now — now, he turns this way, and you can distinctly see his face."

Hubert looked with anxious curiosity, towards this noble scion of the royal house, and his astonishment was so great, that he with difficulty repressed an exclamation of surprise, when he recognised his mysterious companion of the preceding night in the person of the Earl of Richmond.

END OF VOL. II.

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